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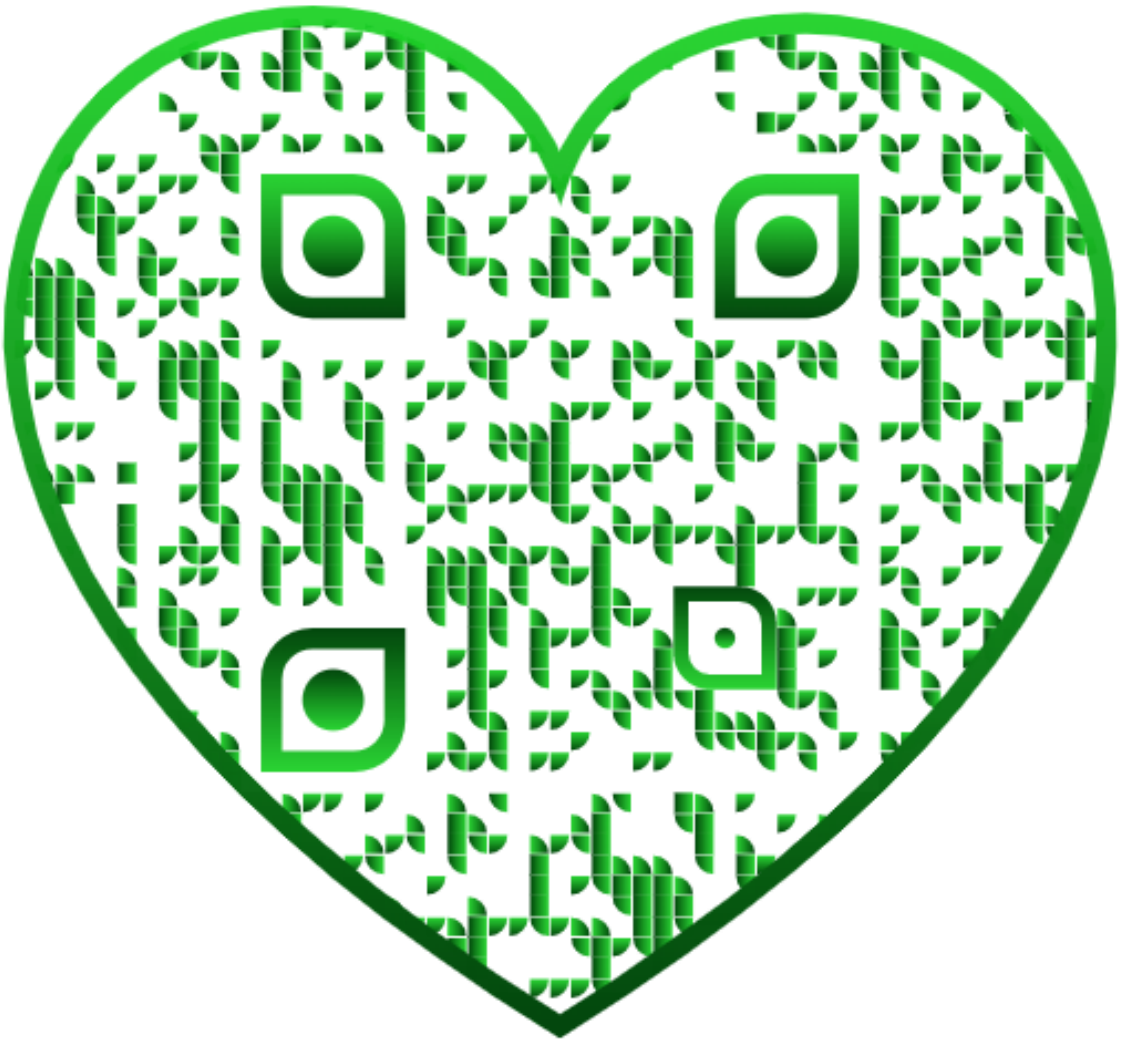

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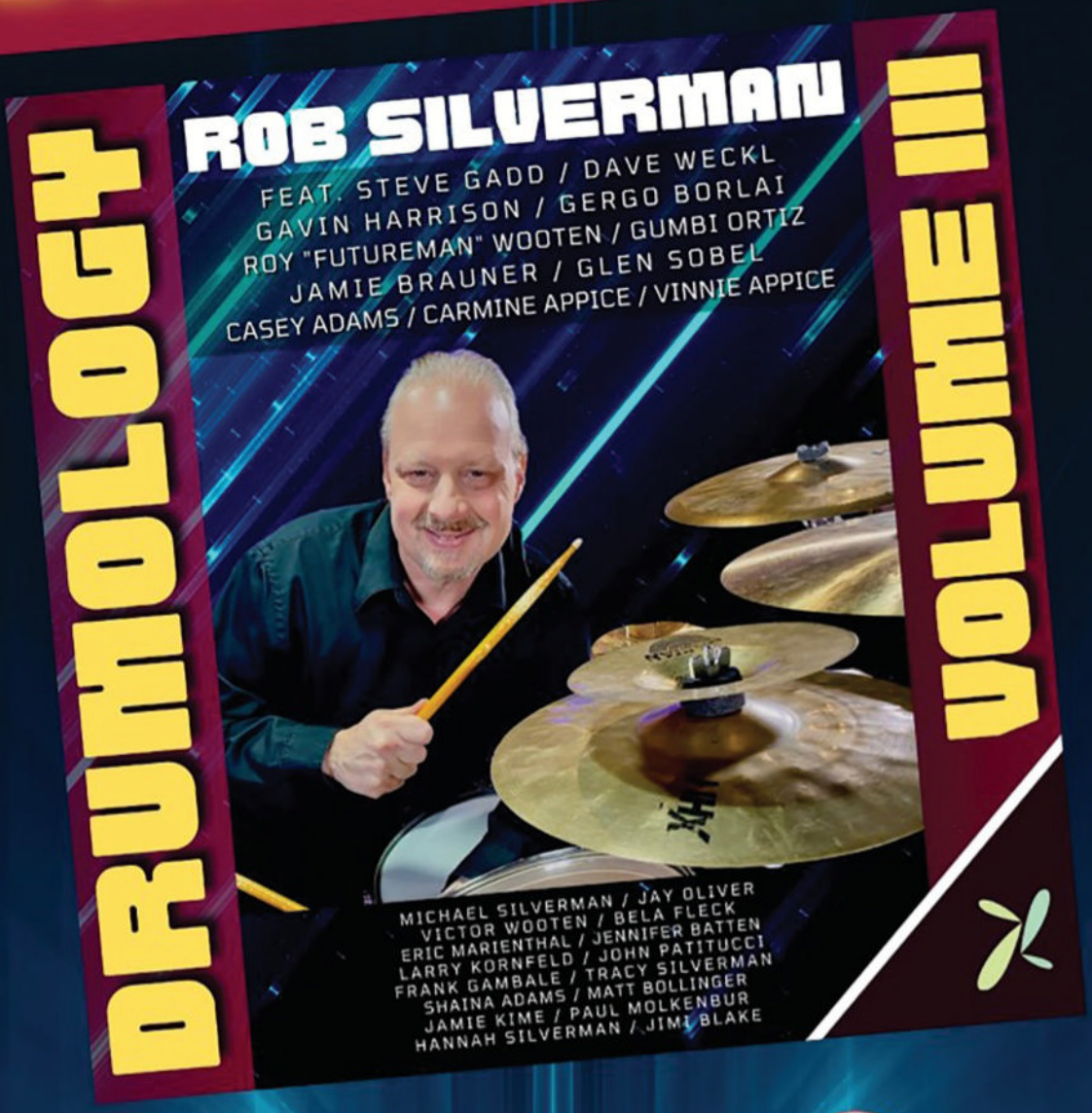

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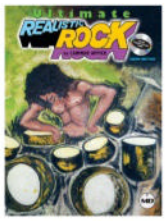

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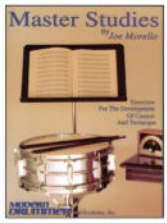

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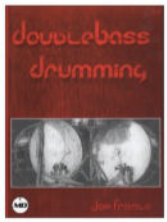

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Diversity and Inclusivity

Diversity and inclusivity is supremely important in all walks of life… *and music*. However, this **is** *Modern Drummer,* so how we apply those modern ideals to our drumming and music, takes priority here. I am always excited when drummers surprise us with the musical diversity and inclusivity in their listening habits, favorite bands, and drummers. This month is no exception.

Would you expect jazz drummer Antonio Sanchez to be praising the song writing skills of Dave Matthews? Then when Antonio says that, "I had nothing but respect for his (Trent Reznor's) music because Nine Inch Nails are some of the most respected 'sonic-conceptualizers' out there," were you surprised? It is expected that Antonio mentions that Roy Haynes is one of his biggest influences. But when Antonio mentions his favorite soundtrack music from Michael Giaccino, Johnny Greenwod, Hans Zimmer, or John Williams, did you go straight to Spotify to listen to some of that music? I hope so!

With all due respect to the absolute masters and creators of our craft. The modern drumming world is about much more than Gene Krupa, Papa Jo Jones, Buddy Rich, Max Roach, Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Steve Gadd, Vinnie Colaiuta, Dave Weckl, Earl Palmer, Ringo Starr, John Bonham, Zigaboo Modeliste, Neil Peart, Joey Jordison, Questlove, Travis Barker, Brian Blade, and Taylor Hawkins.

When a fan of The Mars Volta hears their drummer Philo referring to seeing Robert Glasper and Chris Dave as, "The night that changed my life," I hope that fan goes to YouTube to watch some Robert Glasper and Chris Dave. When Philo said that she had gone through a point when she was, "More into Brian Blade, Marcus Gilmore, Mark Collenberg, and Justin Tyson," I hope a young drummer is inspired to go and see Brian, Marcus, Mark, or Justin perform. I was inspired when Philo said, "I was drawn to classical music, and I was listening to it a lot at the time. It is the only type of music that I can always listen to." That pulled me right in to her orbit. I cued up my favorite recording of Bach's "Brandenburg Concerto" and listened to it for the first time in a while. Thanks Philo!

Furthermore, would you ever expect metal drummer Mike Wengren of Disturbed to make this statement? "The thing that gets me grooving is the old classics. I love 70's rock. I like all the 'geographically named' bands like Chicago, Boston, and Kansas. I like the Eagles." I don't think anyone would expect *that*. Lastly, we all know that many drummer's with over-the-top chops got their start in drum corps. But who would have expected country drummer Rodney Elkins (whose drumming recalls Levon Helm much more than Travis Barker) to refer to drum corps as, "Where I learned the inner workings and intricacies of my instrument." How cool is that?

So many drummers are *much* deeper than the music that they happen to be playing at the moment. The music we listen to, sometimes offers a deeper look into our musical soul than the music that we are performing. Many drummers have extremely diverse and inclusive musical tastes and lives. There is something to be learned from everybody. Draw some inspiration from Antonio, Philo, Mike, and Rodney. See how their sense of musical diversity and inclusion changes you as a drummer, a musician, *and* a person. You might be surprised.

Mark Griffith
Editor and Director of Content

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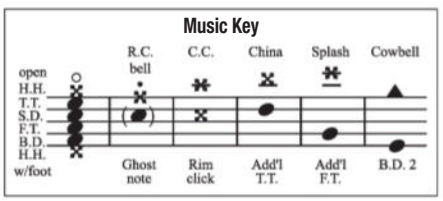

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Brian Eaton's Allegra Custom Master Craft drums

December's submission for **Modern Drummer's Kit of the Month** comes from **Brian Eaton**. Brian's kit is an Allegra Custom Master Craft setup that was custom built at the end of the Dave Peterson era at Allegra Drums. Brian's snare is a Kirsch custom built 7x14 with natural maple hoops (6-ply maple shell, with custom bearing edges, and Espresso satin finish.) His drums are **Allegra Master Craft Drums** (natural maple with a thin nitro lacquer satin finish, round-over bearing edges, and solid aircraft aluminum lugs.) The toms are 7x8, 8x10, 9x12 (6-ply shells;) the floor tom is a 13x15 (6-ply shell;) and the bass drum is a 16x20 with natural maple hoops (8-ply shell.) Brian's **Zildjian Cymbals** are 20" K Custom Flat Top Ride, 19" K Custom Hybrid Crash, 18" A Uptown Ride, 17" K China, 14" K Constantinople Crash, 14" K Constantinople Hi-Hat (top,) and A Mastersound (bottom;) 11" & 9" K Custom Splashes, and an 8" K Splash. His **Paiste Cymbals** include a 6" Cup Chime and a 4" Accent.

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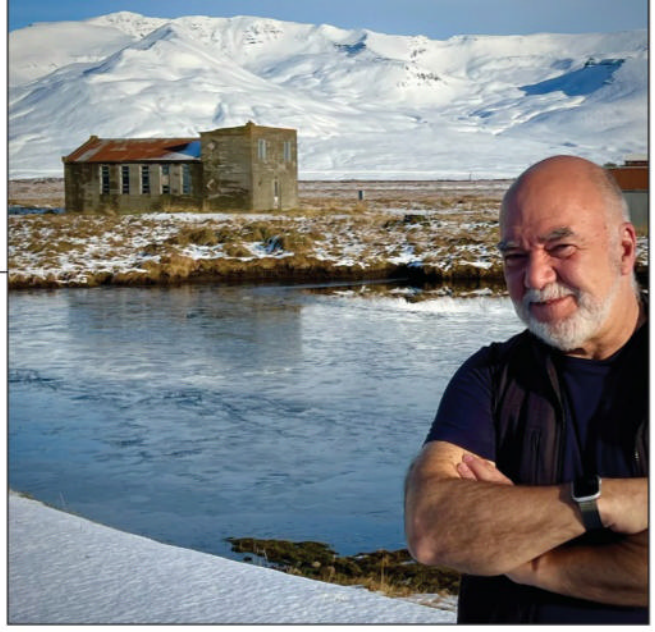
By Peter Erskine



There are busy spells and then there are *very* busy spells. I recently found myself in the middle of a "this job/that job/and another job" when things had been moving along quite calmly for some time. Suddenly, I was juggling spinning plates like that guy on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Life does not always come at us as scripted. Therefore, this one job that I had promised to do way back when my calendar was wide open, had now become a *fishbone in my throat* through trying to please everyone and make the best business decisions I could. *At least I was wanted!*

Okay, let me simplify this. Once you commit to doing a job, you do not want to cancel it if something bigger, flashier, "*better*" (what's that, by the way?) or more lucrative comes along (yeah, I get it, more lucrative is often "better.") I'll just say this, you're going to work long and hard to establish your name, credibility, and reputation. If you say you're going to do something, you need to do it, period. There's no quicker way to demolish a career than to be that drummer that cancels one gig when another one comes along. The small picture is, you'll make a bit more money. The big picture is that word will get around that your word is no good.

Allow me the indulgence of laying out a sequence of events.

1. The twice delayed 50th reunion of my high school alma mater, the Interlochen Arts Academy, was scheduled for mid-October of this year. In anticipation, I booked my flights and lodging on the campus and was looking forward to several days of this personally important holiday.

2. A few days later, a work inquiry came in from my long-time friend and associate Vince Mendoza for a concert of his music along with the singing of the great Brazilian vocalist Luciana Souza. This was a no-brainer "yes," and it nestled comfortably into my calendar.

3. I should also mention that my wife was called away for this entire period to play nanny and granny to our grandson while our daughter was busy filming a new show out of town. I had a little bit of double-duty going on, but I was handling everything okay. I was making lots of "to do" lists and making certain that I was not forgetting anything.

Alex Acuña

4. Then a series of emails came in about my possibly going to ICELAND to participate in a recording project. This would mean either cancelling the Vince gig or cutting my reunion short. While my college teacher's wise words of, "Have the courage to say no," have long-reverberated in my ears, I couldn't resist the invitation and opportunity to visit Iceland, even if only for a day-and-a-half. Therefore, I decided to cut my reunion/vacation short by one day to make all of this work. And Iceland agreed to my spending only a day-and-a-half in the studio.

From left: Jeff Hamilton, Peter, Dennis Chambers and Adam Nussbaum.

5. Then I got a call to participate in a multi-drummer fund-raising event whose theme was paying tribute to the great big band drummers of yesterday. Well, that was easy to turn down, I had already committed to doing Vince's gig, so I replied with a simple, "Sorry, I can't do it."

6. Maybe I should feel flattered, but the organizers changed the date and time so that I *could* do it even though the timing would be tight. That meant that instead of "*simply*" taking three flights to return home from Iceland after a day-and-a-half of non-stop recording, *NOW* I would be driving way across town to do a rehearsal with a big band and be the first of several drummers to stream their performance as part of this tribute. Then I would zip over to the long-planned Vince Mendoza rehearsal. However, a union crew time issue came up and the live stream got pushed back by an hour. This meant that - no matter what – I would now be late for Vince's rehearsal.

All of this meant that my first day home would be a 12-hour work day, followed by a rehearsal and soundcheck. Then a concert the following day for the Mendoza/Souza project. (Did I mention that Alex Acuña was playing percussion?) Once I (*somehow*) finished all of that, I was playing a tribute to composer/arranger Bill Holman on the weekend with alumni members of Buddy Rich's band. The Icelandic recording was Weather Report-themed, and now I'm flying home to (literally) play "Flying Home" as a tribute to Gene Krupa. Then I'm in the contemporary Brazil world, and the next day I'm getting ready to be Buddy Rich. On the night between Brazil and Buddy, I had a celebrity birthday party gig in Hollywood, and then a tribute to Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira a day later. You get the idea. Each one of these involved the logistics of drums, cymbals, and wardrobe. And, oh yeah, I had to feed and walk my dog!

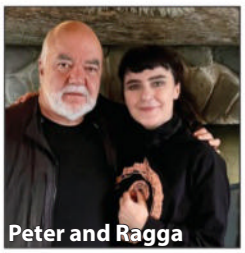
When it rains, it pours. Don't bite off more than you can chew. The early bird … At THIS stage of the game do I equate some level of self-worth with being wanted or working? I'm afraid I do. And I'll bet that you do too. Now

that the bragging part is done, let's look at how time and place can play a role in the success or failure of our endeavors, and one of the venues where my fortitude and forbearance was tested.

Departing Thornton School of Music dean Rob Cutietta is married to a woman from Iceland. Consequently, he knows a number of musicians from Iceland. Rob connected some dots, and I received an invitation from Iceland to travel there and record at a place named Floki Studios. Here is their description of the studio and its *raison d'être*:

From left: (Standing) Siggi Baldursson, Einar Scheving, Jakob Magnusson, Eythor Gunnarsson, (Seated) Peter, and Matthew Garrison

"Around the year 868 AD, the Norwegian Viking Flóki Vilgerdason set sail to establish a settlement in Iceland. Legend has it that he made a pact with three ravens who joined his ship. Believing they would help him find land, he asked them to guide him on his way. At sea, Flóki set the first raven free, and it flew toward the rear of the ship. The second raven took to the air and flew off to the Faroe Islands. But the third raven flew out ahead of the ship with strong purpose, so Flóki set his course to follow the third raven. In time he found land; that land would become known as Iceland. Flóki settled and lived the rest of his life in our beautiful valley, Flókadalur - The Valley of Flóki.



Peter and Ragga

Flóki's story is Icelandic lore, and his use of ravens for maritime navigation earned him the name 'Raven Flóki.' Flóki's story has inspired generations. He has featured in books, novels, and on television, and a monument in his honor was built in our valley, just upstream from our studio. Eleven Music is proud to create our own tribute to Raven Flóki—a world-class recording studio where artists create and collaborate in a relaxed environment with outstanding gear and amenities, surrounded by the striking natural beauty of the Icelandic coastline which is there for artists to explore and enjoy. Whether it is marveling at the northern lights or getting the adrenaline going with rafting, surfing, hiking, biking or horseback riding… Flóki Studios offers artists an escape from the real world, inspiring creativity and friendship. Flóki Studios offers a platform for artists to explore their passion on the edge of the arctic circle. Like Flóki, we have followed our own ravens here to help inspire those that inspire the world."

This guy Flóki reminds me of a drummer I know! Flóki studio is a combination state of the art up-to-date production facility blessed with a literal ton of analog tape machines. It is what's known as a "destination studio," not a place where local musicians go to make jingles, but rather a place to travel to, to get away from it all, to refresh and reinvigorate your senses while hoping for the best from them. Guess what? The concept works!

Recent sessions in and around Los Angeles have found me getting more and more exasperated by the work process. It's no one's fault but mine. A combination of post-pandemic and latent heart-attack recovery (from 1.5 years ago) have made me a less-patient soul during a number of recent projects. After flying, traveling, and arriving on too-little sleep; I was afraid that I'd REALLY be a toxic presence in Iceland. But the magic of this studio combined with the freshness of these excellent Icelandic musicians (plus the most-excellent bass playing of Matthew Garrison) was just a perfect combination of elements. The music was Iceland meets Matthew and I. Honorable mentions go to keyboardists Jakob Frímann Magnússon, Eyþór Gunnarsson, percussionists Einar Scheving, Sigtryggur Baldursson, and a stunning vocalist named Ragga.

The fresh seafood lunches and dinners were out of this world, and to be honest, I can't wait to go back there! However, Los Angeles awaited me. And after three flights, I got home at midnight local time. I was Gene Krupa the next day, I was myself the day after, I was Buddy Rich a day or two after that, and Airto Moreira a couple of days after that. And all along, I was Professor Erskine at the Thornton School of Music. However, I did notice that Professor Erskine was more invigorated than he had been, and his students were leaving the studio smiling.

Although the schedule did threaten to unravel more than one musical relationship, while strengthening others, everything *pretty much* worked out. Maybe that's the way life works. We are tested and it's fun when we score well. But it's okay to fail or to give yourself a "B" (or even a "C") every *now* and *then*. As a vertically challenged friend of mine likes to say, "*Life is short. I'm shorter.*"

More on the idea of judging ourselves, judging others, and *somehow* inserting ourselves into those judgements of others in my next column. Meanwhile, here is a link to a few pics of the studio and location **https://flokistudios.com/deplar-farm** and **www.flokistudios.com**

Check out Peter's drummer profile page, and get a copy of his Legends book at moderndrummer.com

Drum Workshop Puts Innovation on Display at 50th Aniversary Celebration

Drum Workshop hosted a multi-day program of talks and workshops designed to celebrate drummers and the drumming community along with DW's own heritage of innovation.

The opening night brought the introduction of new products that honor the past and excite for the future. The celebration highlighted its 50-year legacy of innovation, while demonstrating its continued commitment to inspire the next generation of drummers with the introduction of breakthrough technology solutions. The 50th Anniversary represents a significant milestone for the company which has built a reputation as the preferred brand of drums and hardware by both professionals and enthusiasts globally. With five decades of product innovations in acoustic drums, pedals and hardware to celebrate, the company is not resting on what's worked in the past. "We have always looked to improve the tools that drummers have at their disposal, and that is what we'll continue to do in the years ahead," said **Don Lombardi, chief product officer and co-founder of Drum Workshop.** "Looking back to 1972 when John and I started the company right here in Santa Monica, we could not be more proud of what the team has accomplished together and in close partnership with the entire drumming community."

Revealed at the event was **DWe**, a first-of-its-kind wireless acoustic electronic convertible drum set. Under development for several years, DWe is designed to blur the lines between acoustic and electronic drums and deliver a natural playing experience. DWe adds innovative, patented technology to the artisan, hand-crafted acoustic drum shells that DW is known for worldwide. Launching in 2023 and manufactured in DW's California custom shop, DWe will deliver industry advances in electronic drums with features including true acoustic to electronic convertibility, wireless connectivity, three zone metal cymbals and a premium sample library.

"DWe will deliver the most authentic playing experience in the market for drummers whether played acoustically or electronically," says **John Good, senior executive vice president and co-founder of Drum Workshop.** "Our focus has always been helping drummers elevate their craft by delivering new innovation, and DWe is no exception." Lombardi added, "Including technology in the drummer's toolkit will enable them to introduce new creative ways to express themselves. DWe solves the issue of having to choose between electronic or acoustic drums and gives drummers the ability to add new sounds to their setup."

In addition to the reveal of DWe and to celebrate the 50-year milestone, DW Drums is releasing a 50th Anniversary Limited-Edition suite of products available globally beginning November 4. **DW Collector's Series 50th Anniversary Limited Edition Drums** are constructed from a combination of persimmon, a hard tone wood similar to purpleheart that produces thick attack and projection, combined with spruce that boosts warmth and tonality. Each drum comes with a veneer of rare, quilted maple fitted with inlaid maple and rosewood 50th Anniversary badges and are fitted with antique gold hardware. These Limited Edition DW drums are available in a 6-piece shell pack Collector's Series® 50th Anniversary drum set, a 6.5"x14" snare, and a 6.5"x14" Edge® snare drum.

Inspired by John Good's memories of growing up in Northern Italy, the **DW Collector's Series 50th Anniversary Limited Edition 6-Piece Drum Set** features a core of persimmon, a hard tone wood similar to purpleheart that produces thick attack and projection, combined with spruce that boosts warmth and tonality. These 10 PLY HVLT™ shells, handcrafted in DW's California custom shop, feature a stunning outer veneer of rare, quilted maple, inlaid with a rosewood and maple 50th Anniversary badge and band. The drums are finished in a burnt toast burst lacquer and fitted with antique gold hardware, True-Hoops™, True-Pitch 50™ Tuning, S.T.M

(Suspension Tom Mounts) and DW drumheads by Remo® USA. This pre-configured shell pack includes 8 x 10" and 9 x 12" mounted toms, 12 x 14" and 14 x 16" floor toms, an 18 x 22" kick drum, complemented with a 6.5 x 14" matching 10-ply hybrid persimmon-spruce HVLT™ shell snare, fitted with DW Mag™ Throw-off. Only 100 of these kits will ever be produced and each includes a certificate of authenticity signed by DW founders Don Lombardi and John Good. In addition, 200 à la carte 6.5 x 14" anniversary snare drums will be made for those adding to their snare collections.

The **Limited Edition 50th Anniversary DW Edge® Snare Drum**, is assembled by hand at DW's California custom shop using the legendary tried and tested Edge® construction. The patented DW Edge™ snare drum was developed by John Good in 1991. Known for its brightness, articulation, volume, attack and sensitivity it has become the go-to snare for a generation of drummers. The new

Limited Edition 50th Anniversary DW Edge® Snare is constructed using a 10-ply persimmon and spruce shell with an exotic quilted maple outer veneer finished with a commemorative maple and rosewood 50th Anniversary inlaid badge. Two heavy-duty brass Edge® rings complete this stunning snare drum which is shipped in a deluxe DW carrying bag. DW will produce 100 of these special 6.5"x 14" Edge® snares. Each will include a signed certificate of authenticity and DW's characteristic professional-grade features including antique gold hardware; DW 3.0 steel True-Hoops™, MAG Throw-Off™, 5P (5 position) Butt Plate™, True-Pitch 50™ tuning, True-Tone™ 20-strand snare wires and DW Drum Heads™ by Remo®.

The iconic DW 5000 pedal has become the industry standard bass drum pedal after its launch in 1977. Five decades later, the company is celebrating its 50th anniversary with the release of a limited edition of the iconic 5000 pedal. Incorporating a DW50 signature logo carbon fiber footboard and heel plate, the **Limited Edition 50th Anniversary DW 5050 Carbon Fiber Single and Double**

Pedals possess the same speed, precision and durability you expect — at a reduced weight. It also incorporates the same innovative specifications synonymous with the 5000 series of pedals including, the Accelerator™ (AD4) drive system for increased speed and sensitivity, Tri-Pivot™ Toe Clamp for improved bass drum hoop grip, the Dual Bearing Spring Rocker which delivers ultimate smoothness and the new textured rubber grip pad on the base plate to reduce slippage while playing. DW's patented Delta Ball-Bearing Hinge, 101 two-way beater, clip-in drum key and built-in spurs all come as standard. Available in both a single and double pedal options. A limited edition DW50 pedal bag is included.

Drum Workshop was acquired by Roland Corporation earlier this fall. DW will continue to operate as a wholly owned subsidiary, with both organizations benefiting from their shared areas of expertise. **Masahiro Minowa, chief innovation officer of Roland** added, "We are excited for DW to reveal this breakthrough innovation and support DW in blending the worlds of acoustic and electronic drums into one seamless package that benefits all drummers."
dwdrums.com

Vater Releases 30th Anniversary Limited Edition Chad Smith Stick!

November 2022 marks Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith's 30th year as a Vater Drumstick Artist. To commemorate this milestone, Vater is releasing a limited-edition Chad Smith model which will only be manufactured until November 1, 2023.

This 30th Anniversary Edition of Chad's Funk Blaster model is finished in a special silver paint, with a 30th Anniversary logo designation along with Chad's signature, which has never been available to the public on his Funk Blaster model before. Chad Smith states, "Heart to the hands to the sticks - which are the conduit to the kit. Vater Drumsticks have been it for me now for 30 years!" Play them or display them as a collectible…Either way, you will own a piece of Chad Smith and Vater History. Contact your Vater Distributor and/or Vater directly for ordering help and information.
vater.com

Latin Percussion Launches Limited Edition Black Box Exotic Cajons and Discovery Bongos

LP is pleased to release two limited edition Black Box cajons with a choice of Exotic Ebony and Figured Cerise Craftwood soundboards. Based on LP's award winning, best-selling cajon, the two new Black Box cajons have clear distinct snare and bass tones making them fun and easy to play for the beginner percussionist. Made from environmentally responsible MDF and incorporating two sets of premium snare wires, they are completed with either a stunning Exotic Figured Cerise soundboard (LP1428NYFC) or Ebony Craftwood soundboard* (LP1428NYEB).

Cajons can be played with hands or cajon brushes to create an infinite number of grooves. The range of sounds achieved with the different tone zones and premium snare wires will provide inspiration for players of all levels.

The new, lightweight LP Discovery Bongos made with LP's Exclusive HD™ Shell Construction, reinforced bearing edges and Black powder-coated hardware.

The new eye-catching and affordable bongos are constructed using a high-density polymer shell, natural rawhide heads, comfortable EZ Curve rims, 9/32" diameter lugs, traditional Cuban-style bottoms and stylish black hardware. The 6 ¼" and 7 ¼"drums are fun and easy to play, simple to tune and they produce a bright dynamic sound suitable for all genres of music.

The Discovery Bongos are available in an assortment of seven vibrant colors: Black Onyx, Race Car Blue, Rose, Sonic Blue, Sea Foam, Slate Grey and Snow White. For a limited time the new bongos are available with a FREE carrying bag.
lpmusic.com

GEWA Digital Drums announces the new GEWA G3 SERIES

The new GEWA G3 SERIES kit consists of a five-piece pad configuration and is aimed at everyone from beginning students to advanced drummers. The Gewa G3 offers no compromise on sound, playability, and connectivity, but it comes in at a lower price than its predecessors. The G3 is the perfect companion for home or studio use. It is even compact enough to be used as a practice kit!

An outstanding feature of the Gewa G3 is the 901 high-resolution sound library. All sounds were recorded at the legendary Funkhaus Studios in Berlin and use up to 1,000 samples per instrument. What's more—these sounds are identical to those of the flagship GEWA G9 Drum Workstation. The player has 40 drum kit presets at their disposal.

The GEWA G3 uses the same trigger technology (and, therefore, has the same playability) as the GEWA G9 and GEWA G5 series. The G3 configuration includes: one 10" kick pad, three 10" tom pads, a 12" snare pad, a 14" crash, an 18" ride, and a 14" hi-hat. All cymbals--including the hi-hats*—feature three zones, a 360° playing surface that can be choked at the edges (*The 3-zone hi-hats are unique to GEWA Digital Drum and are currently the only hi-hats in our industry which offer this feature!) The GEWA G3 module is extremely easy to use. Turn it on, run the Setup Wizard, and you're ready to go - BORN TO PLAY! The GEWA G3 will be available in stores from mid-November at a recommended retail price of €1,899.00. The GEWA G3 Studio 5 comes with:

GEWA G3 Drum Module
three 10" Tom Pads (2-zone)
12" snare pad (2-zone)
10" kick pad
14" crash cymbal (3-zone, 360° play zone, choke function)
18" ride cymbal (3-zone, 360° play zone, choke function)
14" hi-hat cymbal (3-zone, 360° playing zone, choke function)
GEWA Studio Rack
includes the GEWA hi-hat stand and cables.
More information is available at
gewadrums.com

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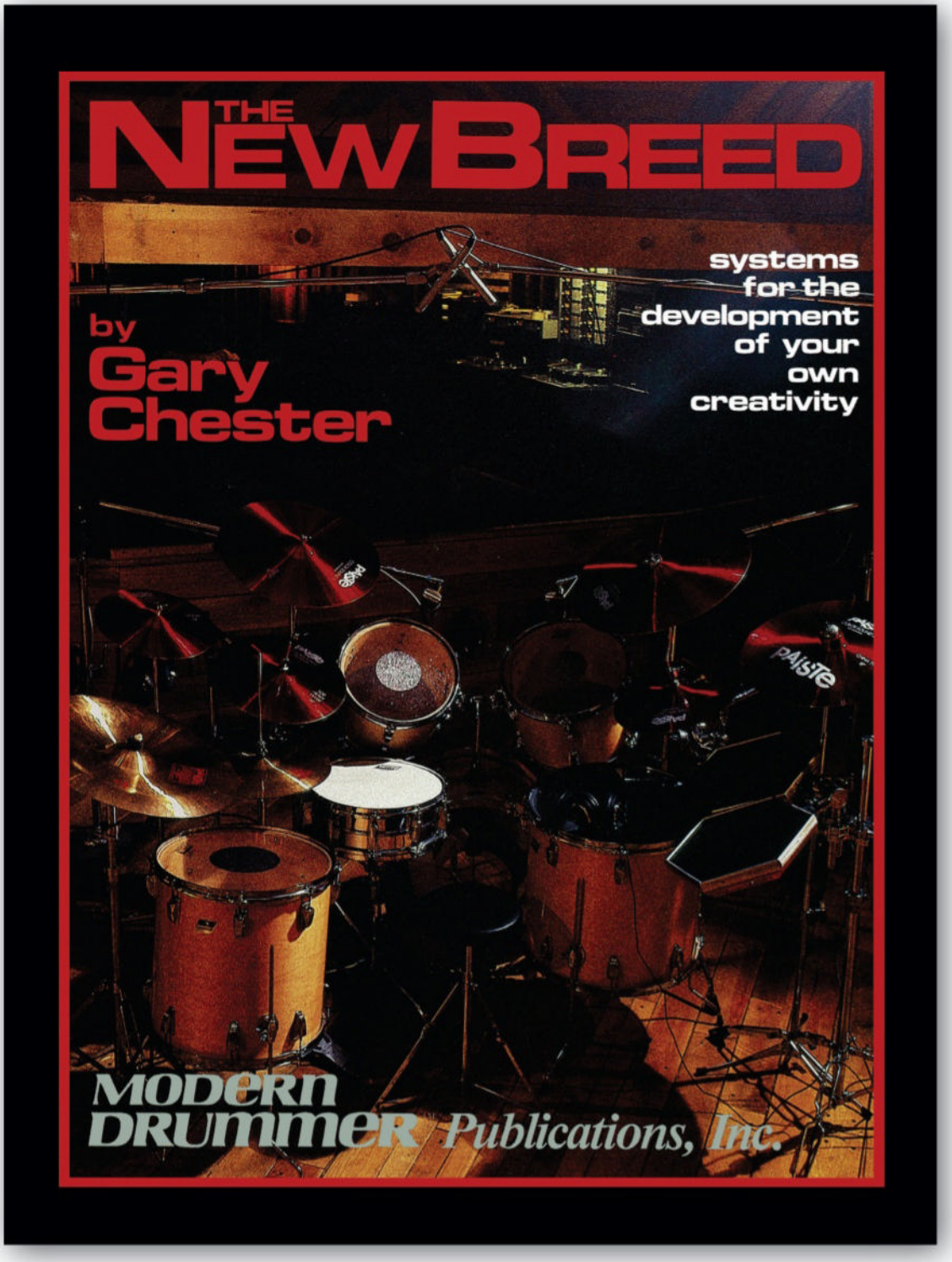
Gary Chester's New Breed



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PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Zildjian Fat Hats and Blast Bell

Warm, Earthy, Dark and Extremely Musical

By Brian Hill

Fat Hats

Zildjian sent Modern Drummer two pairs of the new Fat Hats and a seven inch Blast Bell, they wanted us to give them go, and I must admit that just holding them made me want to play them. On first inspection of the Fat Hats, I noticed that they not only had a wide lathing, but, big, fat hammer marks. I've seen plenty of hammering in my day, but I think this hammering is a larger version than some of what else is on the market today. In fact, the hammering reminded me of what I remember on some really old jazz-oriented cymbals from the past. So not only holding them was exciting me, but so was looking at them! The Blast Bell also had its own distinct look that made me just want to hit it! So, let's take a closer look and, well… *hit them!*

Zildjian worked on the Fat Hats for a decade. They referred to it as a "labor of love." Their goal was to create a set of hats that have a rich blended sound that would fit into a large majority of musical situations seamlessly. It seems that they were trying to create a consistent "go-to" set of hats that would work in a studio or a live setting. I think they succeeded.

The masters at Zildjian came up with a combination of "Dark Hammering," like on a "K," and a wide lathing technique as was used on those old classic Zildjian A's from back in the day. The result was worth the decade long wait! These Fat Hats are a very nice blend of the strengths of both of these classic and musical cymbal lines. The two sets of hats measured in at 14-1/8" and 15-1/8" in diameter. Usually, I can immediately tell the top plate from the bottom just by feel and holding the cymbals. This time was different. I had to look closer because I really wasn't sure from just the feel. It turns out that the Fat Hats top and bottom cymbals are fairly similar in thickness. The smaller weight difference between top and bottom seems to blur the lines between the cymbals a bit, but that creates something very special that really works well when the hats are blending into the music.

I set both sets of hats up and on the same kit at the same time

and found that the two sets complimented each other very well. Both sets of Fat Hats came across very warm, somewhat dark, but they also created a lot of mids which helped them cut through the mix nicely. They have a nice combination of blend and cut. In playing them, I found lush and focused sounds that were crispy and crunchy and very rich and very wide. Ok… OK… they were just flat-out FAT! The 15" set was full and warm while the 14" set supplied a wonderful high-end crispness that not only differentiated it from the larger set but made the use of two sets of hats seem very practical. Fun stuff!

Blast Bell

The Zildjian 7" Blast Bell was a real treat. It was designed in collaboration with Matt Greiner and provides a darker version of the classic Z Bells. I have used "bells" before and most of them have an incredible sustain: Like the "into next week" sustain! Because of that, I found previous bell cymbals to be more of an effects-type instrument. The Blast Bell has a much shorter sustain than most bells, allowing you to be able play a more controlled and consistent pattern when riding it. With the Blast Bell you'll get a whole lot less of the "crazy-white-overtone-noise" sound, which results in more articulation and clarity overall.

The Blast Bell has a lower profile and a raw finish. That gives the bell its distinct look and means that it can be mounted solely on a stand or mounted inverted on top of another cymbal. I really like it mounted inverted on my ride cymbal as it makes a great and easy target! This bell really cuts through with a very consistent musical quality and provides a level of control that I really appreciate.

These new offerings from Zildjian were really easy cymbals to review because the folks at Zildjian just did an outstanding job with both of these beautiful instruments. Both explore the sonic realm of a warmer, darker sound that's only found in metal if you look and work hard enough. I really have to recommend these for a good look……and listen. They're worth it! Check 'em out! The 15" Fat Hats have an MSRP of 720.00 the 14" MSRP is $648.00 and the Blast Bell MSRP is 186.00. **zildjian.com**

ROLAND TD-17KVX2

By Jason Mehler

Roland recently announced some exciting upgrades to their V-Drums product lineup. Included in the rollout is the Roland TD-17KVX2, which is the subject of our product review this month. The TD-17KVX2 builds upon the previous generation TD-17KVX model and features both hardware and sound module updates. For those not familiar with either model, I will explore this kit as a whole and the upgrades.

What's in the Box

The TD-17KVX2 is a 5-piece kit that includes the TD-17 sound module, the KD-10 kick drum pad, a 12" PDX-12 snare pad, three 8" PDX-8 tom pads, two 12" CY-12C-T rubber coated two-zone crashes, one 14" CY-14R-T three-zone ride cymbal, and one 10" VH-10 floating hi hat with bottom unit. Also included is the MDS-COMPACT drum stand (drum stand may vary in some countries.)

Hardware Setup

The setup of the TD-17KVX2 took me about an hour from unboxing to playing, with most of the time being spent on building the MDS-COMPACT drum stand, a curved rack-mount system that holds most of the pads and cymbals. The rack is sturdy but can be a bit challenging to square at first, due to the curvature of the cross-mount bars. Thankfully, Roland has provided guide holes to make it a little easier to align and eliminate wobble.

The left and right extension bars on the MDS-COMPACT seem to be identical, which would allow the kit to be set up either right or left-handed by just moving some cymbal clamps. I am a lefty, but for this review I chose to follow along with the provided (too small for my eyes) printed instruction booklet, which (by default) displays the kit right-handed. Mounting the pads and cymbals was extremely easy. I have always been a huge fan of the ball and socket adjustments which are present on all of the stands and mounts on this kit.

One major thing to note about the TD-17KVX2 is that it does not come with a hi hat stand, bass drum pedal or drum throne. Therefore, unless you already have access to those items, you will need to purchase them separately. I used my old trusty Tama Iron Cobra HH to mount the VH-10 floating hi hat cymbal and an old Yamaha bass drum pedal on the KD-10 kick pad. I would also highly recommend a strong drum rug to provide a secure base for the Velcro-bottomed KD-10 to firmly anchor the bass drum pad.

The mount for the TD-17 sound module allows for two different mounting positions on the rack. This came in handy for me because my hi-hat stand position was blocking the display when the module was mounted in its default position to the left of the hi hat. Moving the module between the hi hat and first tom solved that issue for me.

The pads and cymbals were very easy to connect to the sound module thanks to the pre-labeled wiring harness included with the

product. Because the TD-17KVX2 has an additional cymbal pad, there is also an extra balanced quarter inch cable in the box.

Playing Experience

Once the TD-17 module is powered on, the first drum kit preset is immediately available to play. The pad volume, sensitivity, and response adjustments are pretty good right out of the box and the internal sound samples are smile-inducing. The TD-7KVX2 comes with Roland's new thinner V-Cymbal pads, and combined with the rich, high quality sound samples they are an absolute joy to hit at the end of a drum fill, play light colorful ride patterns across the bow and bell, or even choke the edge like a traditional cymbal.

The performance of the VH-10 hi hat when paired with a standard hi hat stand is impressive. I was able to easily use nuanced hi hat techniques and sounds like heel–toe splashes and sloshy open hats. I won't go so far to say that the hi hat feels *completely* natural, but it does feel very familiar, and I was able to dial-in a better response by simply increasing the sensitivity within the TD-17's interface.

The KD-10 kick drum pad feels nice whether you bury the beater or let the beater rebound. The one I was testing had a little more movement than I would've liked, but again, that is easily eliminated by a good drum rug and secured pedal.

In my opinion the PDX-12 snare pad adds value to this kit. The larger size is reminiscent of an acoustic drum and the rubberized rim is at just the right height to allow a comfortable rim shot. The fact that you can adjust the tension of the double-mesh head makes it that much more appealing.

Each of the PDX-8 tom pads mount nicely to the rack system and can be maneuvered into a comfortable playing position with minimal effort. They also have mesh heads, rubberized rims, and the same great response as the PDX-12. The shallow depth of the pads can be advantageous in situations where overlapping the lower drums will reduce the overall footprint of the drum kit.

Working with the TD-17 Sound Module

At first glance the TD-17 sound module looks very simple. It is indeed really simple to just plug it in and start playing with the library of preset drum kits including the 20 new kits that have been added to the TD-17KVX2. The interface is clean and some of the most used features are easily accessible from the knobs and buttons on the face of the unit. However, there are also some very powerful features hiding just below the surface. These tools make the TD-17 a great tool for building better chops, crafting your own unique samples, and creating great music.

For example, the built-in coaching features are great for all skill levels. I personally love the Quiet Count feature, which loops an audible click for a specified number of measures, followed by a measure or two of silence until the loop restarts. This can be a real wake up call for drummers who assume they have good time but aren't used to practicing to a click. Other coaching features include Time Check and Warm Ups, which are definitely useful and worth exploring.

If you'd rather practice or play along to music, you have a few options. There are several songs embedded into the unit and you can change certain parameters such as tempo and mix volume. You can load and save songs via the SD card port on the side of the unit. Of course, my favorite method of playing along to music is simply pairing with an external Bluetooth source such as a smartphone or tablet and just streaming my favorite playlist from a music app such as Spotify or Apple music. For this application, the TD-17 module has a convenient recessed slot at the top of the unit to hold a smart phone while you play.

If creating unique sounds is your thing, you can manipulate the sampled sounds that are assigned to each pad by tuning, muffling, adding effects, layering and more. The possibilities are endless. You can also import your own sounds if desired. Once you've perfected your sounds, you can record a performance using the physical record button on the unit and export the recording to an SD card. Roland also boasts that you can further develop your playing and time with the free Melodics for V-Drums software. You can also expand your range with sounds, samples, and artist kits, from the Roland Cloud.

My Experiment

Let me preface this by saying, the following is in no way a practical use for the TD-17KVX2 due to the cost of the unit, but it was a fun experiment. Anyway, because the PDX-12 snare pad is similar in size to my Real Feel pad, I decided to try using it as a practice pad while on a day trip. I also brought the TD-17 sound module which I was able to power using a power inverter. The pad sat firmly on my lap and was actually very comfortable to play. The pad plugged in to the aux input on the module and I was able to assign sounds, play with head tensions and other settings to dial-in the best response. I also used the coaching features to practice. This time also gave me a chance to dig deeper into the multi effects and explore the layering features which allow triggering of multiple sounds per pad at specific sensitivity levels.

In Conclusion

The Roland TD-17KVX2 is a great option for someone who is looking to practice, perform, be inspired, and rapidly improve their skills. It's perfect for someone looking for full-featured electronic drums that sound great, feel like acoustic drums, have a smaller footprint, and are reasonably priced. **Here** is an additional unboxing and set up video of Modern Drummer reviewing this set. The TD-17KVX2 currently retails for $2,099. **Roland.com**

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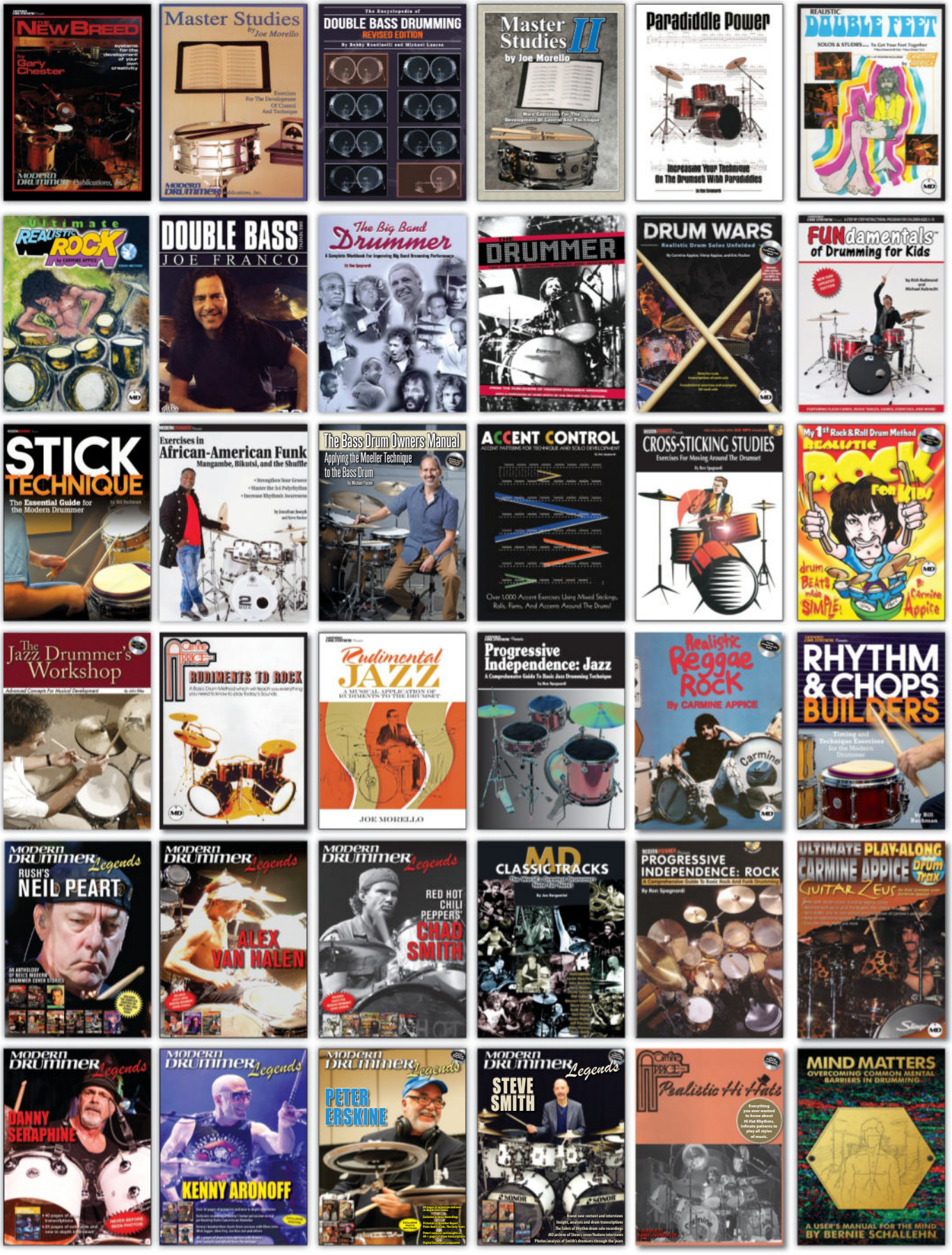


Available in print and digital format at **moderndrummer.com** or from your favorite music retailer

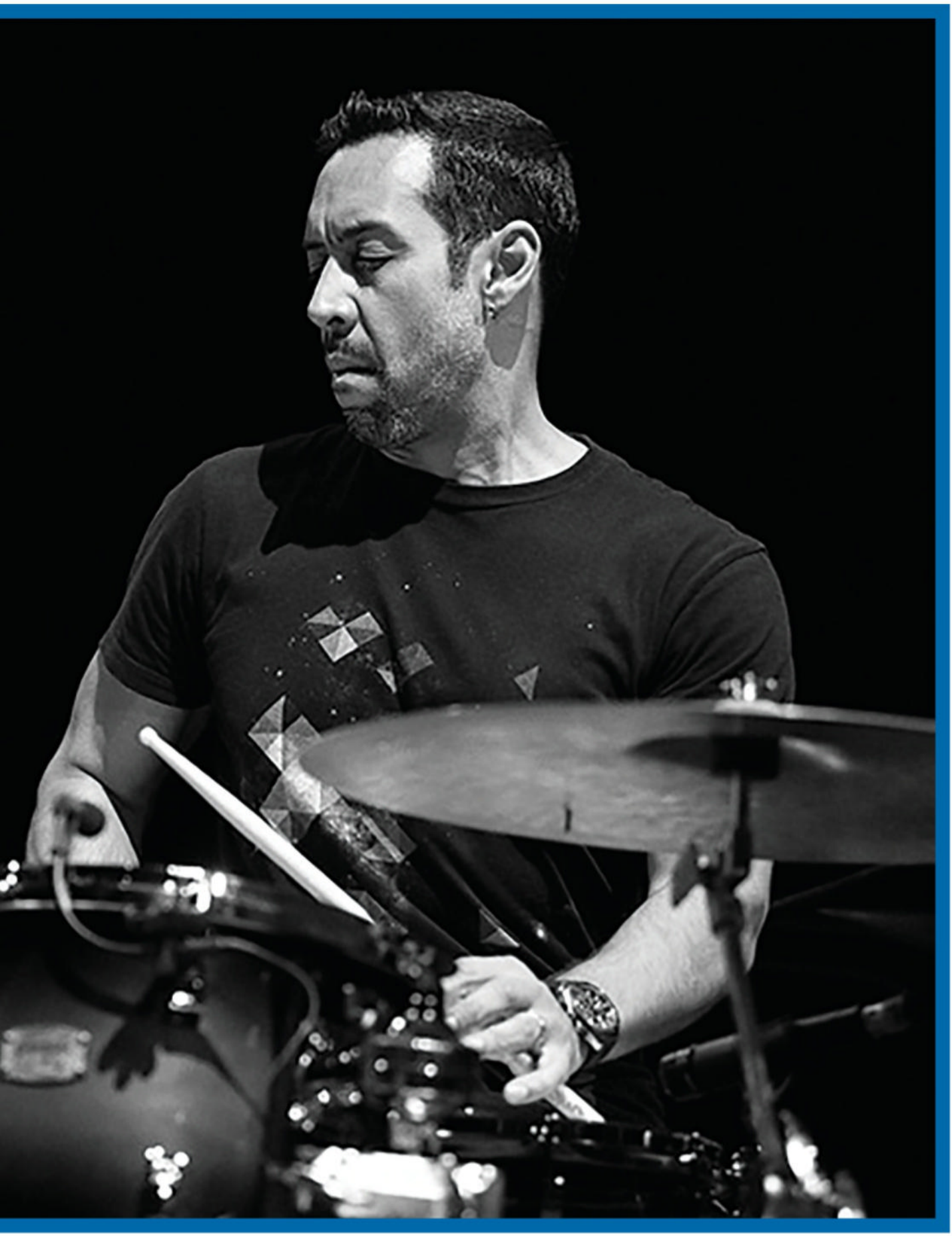
Antonio Sanchez

A Bad Hombre Migrating Towards a Shift

By Mark Griffith

Fernando Aceves

Antonio Sanchez's career is going through a bit of a "*shift*." (Which is actually the name of his new record.) Years ago, the drummer who recorded and toured as a side musician with Paquito D' Rivera, Michael Brecker, Pat Metheny, Gary Burton, and Chick Corea made his first shift and became a bandleader. That resulted in the release of nine recordings as a leader and the formation his first band called Migration. Some of those albums have featured noted jazz musicians such as Pat Metheny, Chick Corea, Joe Lovano, John Scofield, Brad Mehldau, Donny McCaslin, Chris Potter, and others. However, in 2014 another major shift occurred in Antonio's career. He was asked to write the music for the Oscar winning film *Birdman*, for which he created an original concept and score that featured only drums. While drummers and movie watchers celebrated Antonio's artistic vision, the film world tried to recover from the shock of a solo drumming score for a major movie.



The *shift* continued... With prior training in classical piano and composition at the conservatory in Mexico and a strong interest in modern technology for creating, scoring, and recording music, Antonio kept pushing. His 2017 recording *Bad Hombre* was a reaction to the political atmosphere, and an opportunity to create new music in his home studio where he could design sounds, manipulate recordings, and ultimately take charge of his entire creative and recording process. For *Bad Hombre* he recorded and edited his own drum improvisations and layered them with soundscapes and textures, elevating the sonic experience of his rhythmic ideas. Those improvisations-turned-compositions reflected his feelings around the treatment of immigrants and the growing problems facing society. This process of expression appealed to Antonio in a way that was different from his experiences recording and touring with jazz legends and leading his band Migration. This new creative process was drastically different from the music that he had envisioned in the past. No longer did compositions have to come from melody and harmony; compositions could be based on pure vibe, feeling and the discovery of new sounds.

When the pandemic hit, (like the rest of us,) Antonio had a lot of time on his hands. While the rest of the world watched movies on Netflix, and learned how to make sourdough bread, Antonio was busy scoring the music for television shows and movies and learning how to create and record beautiful music at home. Adding to his award-winning work on *Birdman*, his film and TV credits now include *Get Shorty*, and *Hippopotamus* for EPIX, the feature film *Harami*, HBO's *The Anarchists*, and the list is growing.

All of this is what has led up to Antonio's wonderful and fascinating new record called *SHIFT Bad Hombre Vol II*. This is a recording that combines everything that has happened throughout his musical career, and the resulting music is simply spectacular.

MD: This is one of the most interesting records that I have heard in a while. It is nothing like your Migration records, it isn't even like its immediate predecessor *Bad Hombre*. When I first heard it, I thought I was listening to a Nine Inch Nails or a Peter Gabriel record, and (from me) praise doesn't get any higher than a comparison to Peter Gabriel.

AS: Thanks, Peter is one of my favorites as well. I am hoping that this record resonates with people, because it was three years in the making.

MD: Your recordings in the past both as a sideman and as a bandleader have always had a certain "big-ness" to them. Your earlier recordings with Donny McCaslin and David Gilmore helped create a large musical landscape. Even if we go all of the way back to Michael Brecker's Quindectet, and fast forward to Pat Metheny Group's *The Way Up* and *Speaking of Now*; you seem to attract music that is presented on a big canvas.

AS: I have always loved music that was big, has depth, and is presented with a wide scope. I like that in movies, books, and music. My first love was rock and roll music, and listening to ambitious records by Led Zeppelin, Rush, The Police, Tears for Fears… made a huge impression on me. I have also always liked concept albums. Today, there is so much music being created that it is hard to cut through the noise. I think one way to do that is to make music that is well thought out. Sometimes I think that some jazz records are just thrown together. Get everyone together in a studio, everybody brings a tune, sight reads the music, you mix and master it the next day, and it comes out in a month. That can be great, and the playing can be amazing, but to me music can be so much more, and artists should do a lot more than that now. The amount of preparation, time, effort, and love you put into something is going to be directly proportional to how much people are going to want to check it out. Now we have the tools at home to do post-production, mixing, mastering. When I started taking control of my own albums, productions, and mixes, doors began to open that were not previously available to me.

MD: How did you start taking control and opening those doors?

AS: I started with getting some of the right gear. After the success of *Birdman*, I started to get offers to do some more film scores. I bought a house and the gear at the same time, so there was a pretty steep learning curve. I was terrified, but pressure can work magic. That magic resulted in my learning that I could do a lot of things that I couldn't do before. Suddenly I had the space, I had the gear, and I wanted to do something of my own. That's how the first *Bad Hombre* record came about. Suddenly I was editing, splicing takes, reversing waveforms, and just experimenting with music and technology. When there was something that I couldn't do, I would ask someone, or simply go on YouTube to figure things out. There was a lot of trial and error, but I found that it was such a liberating way of making music.

With my band Migration, I would sit at the piano, write melodies and harmony, write out the charts, rehearse the band, and record the music. It was "the usual process." But with this new process, I could base everything around sounds and production. It was a whole new way of creating music that I had never experimented with before. It was like moving from black and white to color.

Fernando Aceves

MD: What is your home studio workspace like?
AS: I work on a Mac with Native Instruments, Spitfire, Spectrasonics and Teletone plug-ins among others. I have a lot of software instruments creating wonderful string, percussion, and guitar sounds. I have some Apollo interfaces so I can record drums in 16 channels. I have plenty of good mics, a few keyboards, midi controllers, real string instruments (guitars, basses, ukulele, mandolin, oud), my main drum kit which is a Yamaha PHX with Remo drumheads, lots of Zildjian cymbals, and miscellaneous percussion. I write on Logic and record to ProTools. Logic can be a little friendlier to write with, but when I record and edit, it's always in ProTools. For musicians nowadays, there is no excuse to not be doing this kind of stuff.
MD: Your career seemed to change with the release of *New Life* and the creation of your band Migration. With those recordings your music just seemed to get bigger, and your musical scope got bigger too.
AS: My band Migration can do anything musically, but I also like experimenting with side projects. Through working with Pat Metheny, I really started to become aware of the model that Pat developed throughout the years. He had the Pat Metheny Group playing big music, and then in between he would release a "small" group record.
MD: Like *Rejoicing* (with Billy Higgins,) *Question and Answer* (with Roy Haynes,) *Trio* (with Bill Stewart,) or *Day Trip* (with you.)
AS: Yes, I love those records, but then he would go back and do a Pat Metheny Group record. He was always moving between different bands and special projects of his own.
MD: I always admired how Chick Corea did that, or musicians like Ralph Peterson, Joe Lovano, and Dave Douglas.
AS: Exactly. But today, that is a lot tougher to do than it was in the past. You can overexpose yourself by touring with a bunch of different bands. Unfortunately, as a band leader on my level, you are forced to commit yourself to a single project, in order to not confuse the listeners or the promoters. I hate the fact that I have to hold back on different projects because I don't want to confuse people. I toured last year with a quartet featuring Donny McCaslin, Miguel Zenon, and Scott Colley. It was two saxophones, bass, and drums. I love that instrumentation, but I am on such a mission with the *Bad Hombre* project now, that I just had to leave that quartet alone.
MD: Did the *Birdman* project lead you into this new realm?
AS: Without *Birdman*, I probably wouldn't have done any of this. This direction isn't something that I was looking for. I've always loved movies, but I never had the aspirations to create music for movies. Then *Birdman* happened. With some exploration and experimentation, I found out that I was good at creating music for movies. Then I got a few more offers.

Fernando Aceves

Writing film music can be stressful and disappointing at times. You are creating music for somebody else, and what you are enamored with musically, doesn't really matter. It's ultimately up to the director, film studio, or producer to decide if your music is creating the right mood for that scene in the movie. Because there are a lot of people involved, there are often a lot of different opinions on what your music should sound like. Quite often, those different opinions will be contradictory, and you (as the composer and performer) have to find a way to please everybody.
MD: However, as drummers and side-musicians, isn't that what we are doing most of the time anyway?
AS: Yes, but with film scoring you are dealing with that in composition, and if you are up against the clock, it can be very

daunting. It's nice when I can work directly with the director or the creator, but that's not always possible. It's tough when you have been working on a piece of music all day (or week,) and a music editor or one of the producers voices an opinion that changes everything. There is a lot of second guessing in the process, and it can be very frustrating. That's why I like to work directly with the director.

On the other hand, it's also nice to stay home and compose in my studio and not have the financial and personal stress of constant touring. It's getting really tough for musicians. Barely anyone buys records anymore, streaming revenue is non-existent, promoter and venue fees are going up, musician fees are going down, record companies are treating musicians horribly, and most venues even request a percentage of artist merch sales.

MD: Let's talk about the new record. Is the subtitle of the new *SHIFT Bad Hombre Vol II* an acknowledgement of this *shift* in your career trajectory and career focus?

AS: A little bit. It's also a play on words because songwriters gave me their songs to use, and I shifted them into my own musical realm.

MD: You created a completely new process to write the music for this record, let's talk about the interesting way that you created these new songs.

AS: I have always been a fan of a good story. I love a good book, a good movie, or a song that has a great story. It's a real art form to tell a story in a short amount of time. You have to be concise and deep at the same time, which I'm a sucker for. Storytelling has to have an arc, characters, motivic development, and you have to remember said characters so you can refer back to them. In music, dynamics and space also help you tell a story. When you analyze Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Debussy, and Berg you see and hear how they wrote full symphonies from developing one idea. I used to think that radically different styles of music (classical, rock, and jazz) had no musical relationships. But as a more mature person and musician, I now realize that it's all the same thing. All good music has the same elements, and if it doesn't have those elements, and if it doesn't tell a story, it's probably not good music.

I used to think that radically different styles of music (classical, rock, and jazz) had no musical relationships. But as a more mature person and musician, I now realize that it's all the same thing.

MD: I use the term "plot line" with students so much, they must think they are taking a literature class.

AS: That's what it's all about. When you play, what are you talking about? What are you trying to say? And if YOU don't know what you are trying to say, then how will the audience? Musicians wonder why people at their gigs are paying more attention to their phones than they are to the music. The way to grab people's attention is to be very clear when you are telling a story.

In the case of *SHIFT Bad Hombre II*, I asked some of my favorite musical storytellers to provide me with a story. That story could be old or new, it didn't matter. This was during the pandemic, so I knew that most of these songwriters would be home. I was sure that these particular songwriters would give me songs that had depth and were challenging. I knew their songs would focus on issues that are important to me like social justice, human rights, women's rights, mental health, addiction, etc. These are things we are all battling as a human race and as individuals.

I told each of them that I was going to completely re-imagine the musical elements of their songs, and I asked their permission to do that. I kept the integrity of their songs, but I re-imagined everything around the vocals, the harmony, and the instrumentation. My idea was to have the drums and the voice on equal grounds. I wanted to not only surprise the listeners, but I wanted to surprise the songwriters with the end results. My goal was to help them see their own song in a completely different way. These weren't collaborations because there really wasn't a back and forth between the songwriters and me. I reharmonized and rearranged the songs, completely changed the basic drumbeat ideas, and I tried to take sonic paths with the production that were not obvious or expected when I re-imagined their tunes.

MD: A lot of great songwriters agreed to let you do this.

AS: Thankfully, yes. In the case of Dave Matthews, he gave me the full multi-track recording of the session for "Eh Hee." I extracted his voices, and I went to work. His version is very linear, and entirely in 4/4. I edited his vocals to be much more hypnotic. The new version wound up having all sorts of bars in odd-times but it really flowed. I also asked Pat Metheny to play a crazy guitar solo in the middle to round things off. I always want to do justice to each song, but I also wanted to give the songwriter a real surprise when they heard their composition again for the first time.

The first song that I did was Silvan Estrada's "El Agua y la Miel." I had seen her perform that song in Mexico with only her voice and her Quatro guitar. I immediately thought that I could have so much fun re-imagining her tune. I asked her permission after the concert, and she made a recording of her singing and playing the song with a click track, and (again,) I went to work. When she heard my final version, she was amazed that her song could "*do*" what the final version "*did*." She was thrilled that I took a simple and beautiful song that was very linear in its construction and made it big and epic.

When I approached Trent Reznor, he managed to find the time to record something new for me. I couldn't believe it! He recorded some vocals with Atticus Ross playing synths. The song was atmospheric, dreamlike and really cinematic. Maybe he thought that I was going to record some *Birdman*-like drums on it, I'm not sure. But I kept hearing it as a really powerful industrial rock anthem, so I ran with that. It took a while to finish but when I played him the final version, I told him that I had nothing but respect for his music because Nine Inch Nails are some of the most respected "sonic-conceptualizers" out there. Happily, he loved my re-imagination of his song, and he connected me with his engineer so we could finish the mix together. It was an incredible experience to have all of this raw material from these incredible storytellers and to be allowed to run with the stories that they created. It was a producer's dream.

MD: Talk about the track that you did with Meshell Ndegeocello, "Comet Come to Me."

AS: Meshell is one of my heroes. She is incredible in so many ways, a singer, a producer, a composer. Her first three records are definite desert island albums to me. I listen to them all of the time. I am still amazed how big and beautiful they are. Gene Lake's drum parts on the first two are genius. I really wanted Meshell on this record. She sent me a few things that she had already recorded, but "Comet Come

to Me" really resonated with me. She sent me vocals, a little bit of bass, click track, and lots of space. I couldn't really make total sense of it in the beginning. I originally looked up the song to give me a reference point, but I couldn't find it online, so I figured it was a demo of an unrecorded tune. I listened to what she sent me a lot, and finally found my way in. After I finished it, I sent it to my manager and his assistant. They told me that the *Bad Hombre* version was so different from the original… I was quite surprised, "*what original?*" It turns out that when I looked it up online, I must have spelled something incorrectly. I never heard (or even knew) the original version. But in retrospect, I'm glad I didn't hear it because it would have influenced me to approach the song in a completely different way. Thankfully, Meshell was also very pleased with how it came out.

I think the most poignant story on the entire record is Becca Stevens' song called "The Bucket." When I first approached her, she asked me what the album was about, and I told her that the general mission behind *Bad Hombre* was social justice. She sent me the text of a soliloquy from a play that inmates at the Oregon State Penitentiary had written and won an award for. That soliloquy was penned by a man named Sterling Cunio who was involved in a double homicide at age 16, for which he received two consecutive life sentences and spent 26 years in prison, including nine years in intermittent solitary confinement. While in prison he began learning to read and write poetry. Through the process, he became a model inmate, found a way to save his own soul, and to help others.

Becca wrote a gorgeous melody and harmony to his text. She asked me if I wanted her to add a drum part to the song, and I told her "*absolutely not!*" since I was trying to surprise her with my treatment of the tune. Her version was very folky and really beautifully crafted. I took her guitar out in the beginning and left her voice a cappella. Then I started adding all sorts of crazy drum beats around her voice and reharmonizing the melody with different string and keyboard instruments. I brought her original guitar tracks back in towards the middle of the song. I think she was startled by my version at first, but by the end of the song she loved what I had done with her amazing rendition. Once the song was finished we realized that we needed permission from Sterling Cunio to use his words. Thanks to the fact that Becca's husband (Nate Schram) has a foundation that brings music to prisons, we were able to get in touch with him in prison. We spoke to him, showed him the song through the phone and he was honored and humbled that we had chosen his words and story, and he granted us the permission we needed. It was a crazy experience! However, to make things even more amazing, I found out that after *SHIFT* came out in August 2022, Sterling's sentence had been commuted by the governor of Oregon in November of 2021. Now Sterling is now a free man, and he is helping other ex-inmates adapt to civilian life after prison. He is still creating poetry and literature and continuing to do positive things. It's an incredible story of redemption, and I'm glad his words inspired the song.

MD: Was there anyone that didn't like your treatments or final versions?

AS: Luckily, no.

> My idea was to have the drums and the voice on equal grounds. I wanted to not only surprise the listeners, but I wanted to surprise the songwriters with the end results.

MD: Were there any songs that you got into, and completely rethought your approach in mid-stream? Therefore, changing your approach to create a completely different treatment from what you had originally conceived?

AS: Yes, that happened on every song! I did this all during the pandemic, so I would start a song with one approach, then completely rethink it and do something else, and then go back to my original idea, and so on… I had time, and I was constantly aware of the pressure of having this amazing story from a great songwriter and having to create something that would be worthy of the tune and the artist. My main thoughts the entire time were, *"What is the artist going to think when they hear my treatment of their story?"*

MD: *No pressure…* Did anyone ask for additional musical guidance from you, regarding what you wanted from them?

AS: Both Ana Tijoux (the incredible hip hop artist from Chile') and Lila Downs (the amazing Mexican singer,) both asked me to send them a drum beat for them to use as inspiration. They just wanted to get a vibe of what I wanted but the most collaborative process came with "Trapped (Red Room)" with my wife Thana Alexa. With that one we had the luxury of going back and forth since we were living under the same roof and I really went all in with the drum production.

MD: Did any of the artists tell you that they felt any pressure supplying stories and songs to you?

AS: No. I am the least "famous" (or "known") musician on this record! (laughs). I told each of them that I would work with whatever they would give me to use. Some people sent me ideas that were very short. That meant that I had to lengthen what they had given me and create new musical sections within their story.

The song that Rodrigo y Gabriela sent called "M-Power" was very short. I created a completely new outro and placed their guitar parts at different places throughout the song. They were probably the most surprised of anyone when they heard the final version of their song. Their style of rhumba-flamenco usually has very "inside" harmony but when I rearranged it, I added a lot of extended harmony, in the end I think they dug it.

MD: That was the most surprising track on the record to me, it sounds like "*Mexican Mahavishnu*" (laughs...)With all of the tracks that ProTools can provide, and all of those sounds at your fingertips, and acting as your own producer, how could you tell when each tack was done?

AS: Great question, that is an issue sometimes. Luckily, I did this record during the pandemic, and I had the luxury of time. I lived with this project for almost three years so I had the advantage of being able to listen to each track for a long time and then come back a week later to see how it sounded after I had been away from it for a bit. I would add or subtract whatever seemed right. When I heard that something was missing, I could tell it wasn't finished. However, sometimes I would add something, and it would fail miserably so I would remove whatever I had added. It's all so subjective.

MD: It's important to note that you had the time to make those mistakes, and that can be a real luxury. Sometimes it's hard when there isn't the extra set of "unemotional" ears of a producer to help with that subjectivity.

AS: Although I didn't have a producer, I did have Thana here to bounce ideas off, she is a great musician. Since we were both

"trapped" here together during the pandemic, she was a constant collaborator, especially on the song that she and I wrote called "Trapped (Red Room)," and on the other song that she wrote with her trio SONICA called "Doyenne." On my song "Waiting" I had originally recorded scratch vocals but really wanted Thom Yorke (from Radiohead) to sing on it. When I couldn't make contact with his management, I ended up just leaving my voice in there since I didn't think it sounded that bad.

MD: It must have been terrifying when you gave the finals back to the composers.

AS: Absolutely. It was like people were trusting me to babysit their children, and instead I did plastic surgery on their kids. With Dave Matthews, I sent him the track, and I didn't hear from him for two weeks, so I started getting a bad feeling that he had heard it and didn't like it. Then one day I got a barrage of texts from him telling me that he finally had time to listen and that he loved it. We even ended up doing a whole video for it!

MD: Although with most people, if they don't like something they will tell you that immediately.

AS: That is true. Dave Matthews told me that since I had written so much music around his song, that he wanted to give me writing credit, so we renamed the new version "Eh Hee 2.0." Trent gave me writing credit too, which is absolutely crazy to me. I'm a drummer, and here I was working with all these rock star songwriters. It was a humbling process.

MD: It sounds to me like besides being a drummer, you are becoming a really good arranger, although you are not arranging in the traditional way.

AS: I often think of it as creating extreme remixes. I have both strengths and weaknesses as (what people call) a multi-instrumentalist. I don't call myself that, I would never appear on a stage with a guitar but at home with no one watching, I can put enough little things together that it can start to sound good to me. I also sang a lot of background vocals on many of these tracks. When something sounds good to me, I get excited, then I hear more things, and then I keep going and going and going…

For this record, I really wanted to use the drums as a production tool. When you hear well produced rock records like Peter Gabriel *So*, U2 *The Joshua Tree*, Led Zeppelin *Physical Graffitti,* or Tears for Fears *The Seeds of Love,* you hear tons of guitars, many tracks of voices, and layers of synths and keyboards. But you usually hear only one drum set part. Sure, there might be a drum machine, some percussion, or a loop, but there's usually only one actual drum kit. I challenged that by asking, "Why can't I use the drums like someone else would use a guitar or keyboards?" I started playing one kit and layering that kit four or five times. The results were huge sounding drum tracks. Then, (for instance) I would create a different and super compressed part that was panned hard left. Then I did another part with delays that was panned hard right. Then I would create a super trashy drum part that I could move around in the mix at different times.

Fernando Aceves

MD: That sounds like a lot of tracks.

AS: There were! I used the Yamaha EAD microphone for recording all of these different stereo drum tracks, so I wouldn't have to use 16 tracks for every different drum set. On Trent Reznor's tune, the verses have a very dislocated drum part so I recorded a few different linear sounding eighth note grooves for that. I layered them and panned them really wide. Then I started muting different sounds randomly so what you hear on the track is all of these eighth notes sort of

bouncing around the stereo field randomly. Then when we get to the chorus and things get really big, I have two drum kits (one panned to each side) playing very similar parts. As a drummer it's a really gratifying way to have a lot of drums on a track without having to include a drum solo. I wanted to use other techniques besides solos to make the drums stand out, and for the listener to really feel them.

MD: Often, the drums are not the driving force in this kind of music. There is a drum part, but it's usually not very present in the mix or the arrangement. But with *SHIFT Bad Hombre II,* the many tracks of drums are a musical motivator and a main production tool in the music. That leads me to ask, are you playing some of this music live? How is your creative process transferring to the stage?

AS: We are playing ALL of this music live. That was one of the most daunting aspects of this project. If we played this music with a standard quartet, it would be cool, but it would sound like an "unplugged" version of the record, and I didn't want that. We are playing the music with a quartet but it's not your standard quartet. Thana Alexa is singing (and rapping!) all of the lyrics, and she is using live looping and effects to create all of the different vocal parts. We are playing live with a click, and we are using some tracks of the parts that are essential, like some synth parts that are on the songs that just fatten everything up. That means that pianist BIGYUKI is free to really play keyboards, as opposed to just playing parts. Lex Sadler is the bassist, and he is playing keyboard bass as well and manipulating the tracks in real time. I also kept some of the original voices from the album so that you hear Dave Matthews or Trent sort of doing backgrounds for Thana. Some of the original drum parts were kept in there too to double what I play live and make it sound bigger.

Fernando Aceves

MD: What is the relationship between the first *Bad Hombre* record and this one. They seem like very different records.

AS: They are completely different. I did the first one during the Trump candidacy. Many people might remember the speech that he made saying *"we have some bad hombres here and we have to get them, out."* I came here from Mexico to try to excel at what I do, and hearing him say those things about Mexicans created a very traumatic time in my and many others' lives. I had a lot of anger and frustration about those words, and I took my emotions right to the drum set. I spent many days improvising on the drums and recording, not thinking about anything like tunes or solos. It was pure stream of consciousness improvising. Then I went back and started to edit parts of my improvisations together to create concise performances. I started adding all sorts of electronics and layered sounds around my drums and I ran with that process. I had no outside help or input for that record so it was just me. I like the combination of acoustic drums and electronic instruments, and I enjoy bridging those two worlds. That entire process (and my Bad Hombre alter ego) really liberated my creative process from doing records in the way that I had previously been working. That liberation led to *SHIFT Bad Hombre Vol. II*.

MD: Apart from the new processes that you created for the Bad Hombre records, how does you background in classical piano help in your compositional process? How do you compose?

AS: Without the piano I don't know how I could ever compose anything. Sometimes I hear a melody and I go to the piano to extract it. I hear a bass line, chord changes or sometimes a drum groove. Those are usually my initial building blocks. Some of my more recent records have been pretty ambitious compositionally. *The Meridian Suite*, is one long composition from beginning to end for which I used all of my different musical motifs as different characters that I wanted to bring back throughout the piece. By the end of the suite those characters had been completely transformed by what had happened musically. That album was inspired by The Pat Metheny Group's *The Way Up*.

> I had to learn how to play really, really, softly, yet with intensity. Which is the hardest thing to do.

MD: How do the two sides of your musical personality the "Bad Hombre" and the (for lack of a better term) "jazz drummer," affect each

other?

AS: The *Bad Hombre* way of creating music can be very random and crazy, like the first record. But I think my knowledge of jazz and musical structure and harmony gave the first *Bad Hombre* album consistency and form. I think my study of classical music and jazz has informed everything that I do, and my goals to tell a story and create an emotional connection, remain.

MD: How did working with Pat Metheny influence you?

AS: Pat Metheny has influenced me in many ways. His work ethic is infectious. The way that Pat will painstakingly prepare, compose, produce, and edit each record is an eye-opening experience. Seeing someone that is so established, work so hard, and be so careful when he is creating a record, is amazing.

I also learned a lot by watching Pat put sets together. They are never random. He always knows what he's going to play next, he knows where he is playing each tune and why each tune is placed where it is. How you put a set list together has a huge effect on people. When I am leading my band, I always think about where I am going to talk, how long I should talk, and what I am going to tell them about the music. People deserve to get a great show, not just a bunch of guys playing "great."

When we were recording *Speaking of Now,* Pat told me that he thought people liked the Pat Metheny Group records because of the sheer amount of information there is in each tune. We did multiple takes of every tune, he reminded me that we were creating important music, and he was adamant about his belief that it had to be done perfectly. Coming from the musical world of jazz where you often do an entire album in one day, to the musical world of Pat Metheny where we were doing one track a day was a luxury. We had a long time to really work on every song. Coming from that experience, I started to take several days to record each of my records. I would have mock-ups of tunes, create midi maps and tempo mapping for each song.

MD: Do you use a click for the Migration records?

AS: Yes, it makes it easier to edit them. But I would manipulate and move the click around, so the music never felt stiff. I learned that from Pat.

MD: Before we move on from Pat. The record *Tap* is just you and Pat playing duets, I love that record! What can you tell me about *Tap*?

AS: That is one of my favorite records with Pat. Obviously it's just me and Pat, but we are playing music that is composed by John Zorn. He created melodic and rhythmic cells that Pat and I expanded on and then did a lot of post production to it. The nature of that music was just so open, so daring, and just so different from what Pat usually does.

MD: How does Pat bring music to the Pat Metheny Group? Does he bring demos, or big scores, or structures?

AS: I've been with him for 21 years and it has changed over time. I'm also the only drummer he's ever used that has played on virtually every project he's done. Since I joined in 2001 I have been in The Pat Metheny Group, Trio with Christian McBride, The Unity Band, The Unity Group, The Quartet with Gary Burton, and now this most recent quartet with Linda May Han Oh and Gwilym Simcock. So I have done lots of different music with Pat, and each context is different but with the Pat Metheny Group he would usually give us demos that we could practice with.

MD: Speaking of hard music, you did a beautiful record with Billy Childs called *Autumn: In Moving Pictures*.

AS: That is another of my favorite records. You're right that is some really difficult music. Since I have started my full-time bandleader thing, it has taken me away from recording with more people and doing more different projects. But I came to the realization that I can't do all of the things that I want to do and at the level that I want to do them, if I keep spreading myself too thin. And that is exactly what was happening.

MD: The Chick Corea record *Dr. Joe* is another favorite of mine. How did working with Chick Corea influence you?

AS: Chick was my "gateway drug" into jazz. I was coming from listening to rock music so when I heard the Chick Corea Electric band it was mind boggling and life changing. It became a dream to someday play with Chick. After I joined Pat's band we did a quartet tour with Pat, Michael Brecker, Christian McBride, and myself. We played a few gigs with Chick's band, and I told Chick, "I don't want to die without ever playing with you, so if there is ANYTHING ever that we could do, I'm THERE!" Eventually we did a bunch of gigs together, and not only was he gracious enough to play on my first record (Migration,) but he wrote two tunes.

What did I learn from him? Work ethic. I admired how prolific he was. He was just like a cat that you could throw into the air and would always land on his four feet. That was Chick. He could put the strangest combinations of people together, and through his piano playing, he would make it work. He was daring, fearless, and he always had a smile on his face when he played. He enjoyed the musical process of getting into trouble and finding a way out of it.

> I like to try and find out why people sound the way they do. For example, why does Jack DeJohnette sound different from Roy Haynes. If you can figure out those differences, then you can summon that energy and apply it to your playing.

MD: One of your first gigs was with pianist Danilo Perez what did you learn from him?

AS: I really learned about dynamics from playing with Danilo. We would often be playing in big rooms with bad acoustics (like churches.) And I would be playing backline drums that weren't really set up for jazz. I had to learn how to adjust to those situations, and I had to learn how to play really, really, softly, yet with intensity. Which is the hardest thing to do.

MD: I always refer to that as, "Burn hot on a low flame," and yes, it is really hard, but very useful... What did you learn from playing with Michael Brecker?

AS: Just the process of playing duets with Michael Brecker and being in the eye of his hurricane was amazing. Although you were in the middle of all of this energy that Michael was creating, you knew everything was going to be fine. The first time that I played with Michael I was aware of the drummers who had played with him like Jack DeJohnette and Jeff Watts. I was trying to emulate that energy, and I thought that I had overdone it. I asked him about it after the gig and he said, "No you can always play more." Then I asked him for

some suggestions, and he said, "If I felt as though I needed to give you suggestions, you wouldn't be here." Some bandleaders are very eager to give a lot of direction, but some aren't. I try to use that same approach with my music. I give people a little bit of direction, then I let them be free within the music.

MD: I sometimes get a little messed up by knowing the drummers who have done a specific gig before me. How aware are you of the drummers who have done a gig before you? For example, with Pat there was Danny Gottlieb and Paul Wertico before you. With Gary Burton, there was Bob Moses, Roy Haynes, Michael Hyman, and many others…

AS: I am always hyper-aware of who has done a gig before me. I am never really trying to copy anyone, but I am always trying to bring a similar energy. Because of that, in the past I would try to force things that weren't natural. But now I'm older and I realize that *I am what I am*. Now I am much more secure with who I am, and I have realized that I can't *be* anyone else.

When I first joined Pat, we were playing material that both Danny and Paul had played. I obviously had to bring some of their energy to the gig in my own way. I know Pat was fairly uncomfortable when I joined the group because the older material sounded weird to him since I had a such a different sound and approach from Danny and Paul. When I listen to my first record with Pat (*Speaking of Now*) I hear myself trying to please, instead of someone who is sounding like himself. By the time we did *The Way Up*, Pat was more used to me, I was more used to the band and everything I did sounded like it belonged.

When I was playing with Gary Burton in the quartet with Steve Swallow and Pat, Pat would play a long solo of six or seven choruses, and then Gary would play a couple of choruses and create a perfect solo. Pat and I would look at him and wonder how he did that. That taught me that you can tell a story in a short amount of time, and still tell the story very well.

MD: That *Quartet* record that you just mentioned is one of my favorites. You sound very Roy Haynes-ish on that. How influential is Roy Haynes on your playing?

AS: He is one of my biggest influences. I should get sued because of the amount of stuff that I have stolen from Roy, but I think that's healthy. Stealing ideas is fine but trying to copy other players can be dangerous because you wind up sounding like a *bad copy*. I like to try and find out *why* people sound the way they do. For example, *why* does Jack DeJohnette sound *different* from Roy Haynes. If you can

ANTONIO'S GEAR

DRUMS: Yamaha PHX
14" × 18" Bass Drum
5" x 14" Signature Snare
14" x5.5" Loud Snare Drum
10" x 12" Tom
13" x 14" Floor Tom
15" x 16" Floor Tom

CYMBALS: Zildjian
14" old A Hi-Hats
10" A Custom EFX (top) over 14" Mini China (bottom) Stack
22" K Constantinople Medium Thin Low Ride
16" EFX Crash
8" A Custom Splash (top) over 8" A Custom Splash (bottom) Stack
21" Vintage K Ride (with a missing chunk)
14" Mini China (top) over 16" Trashformer (bottom) Stack
6" inverted A Custom Splash (top) over 18 Prototype Crash with holes (bottom)
12" Special Recording Hi-Hat top (top) over 14" Trashformer (bottom Stack
20" K Constantinople Ride

STICKS: Zildjian brushes and Antonio Sanchez model sticks.

HARDWARE: Yamaha.

HEADS: Remo, Bass drum: Coated Ambassador batter/Yamaha single-ply logo head; Snare and Toms: Coated Ambassador X batter, Clear Ambassador resonant.

HOME STUDIO: iMac with Avid Pro Tools, HD 12, Native Instruments Komplete Kontrol S88 weighted keyboard controller, Avid Artist Mix control surface, two Universal Audio Apollo 8 Thunderbolt audio interfaces, a pair of Yamaha HS8 powered studio monitors, and a host of plug-ins (Spectrasonics' Omnisphere, Spitfire Audio, Teletone Audio, Soundtoys, and miscellaneous plugins.)

KEYBOARDS: Kawai Electric Piano, Moog Matriarch, Moog SubPhatty, Prophet REV2, Korg Kaoss Pad.

GUITARS: Pat Metheny Signature Guitar, Yamaha Electric Bass and Acoustic Guitar, Mandolin, Oud, Ukulele, Acoustic Bass Guitar.

figure out those differences, then you can summon that energy and apply it to your playing.

I am from Mexico, and I came to this country to play jazz, not Mexican music so I had an impostor syndrome for a long time. A lot of Latinos come here to play their music and that's how they thrive, because they play Afro-Cuban or Brazilian music better than Americans. But I didn't come here to do that. It has been very hard for me to play a music that I was not born into, and I didn't grow into it either. In fact, I started playing jazz reasonably late in life. For a long time, I renounced all other music except jazz. I started to research why different jazz music sounded like it did. I tried to copy the greats, I tried to play all of the music with the right accent. But eventually I realized that if I didn't bring myself to the drums I was never going to stand out. That is when I started to try and bring everything together musically. And without that realization I would have never been able to do The Pat Metheny Group, or my band Migration, or the Bad Hombre music.

Along the way I think I have become really good at pacing the music so you can keep the music growing while keeping the intensity very high. The rock vocabulary provides different ways to do that, as does the jazz vocabulary. But if you combine many different musical approaches in your drumming, you discover more choices and musical devices to keep the musical intensity high. I have discovered that there are many ways to sustain intensity and creativity.

MD: I think you just answered the first question that I asked. I asked you why you seem to do a lot of "big music" projects. Maybe it's because of the way that you pace the music while keeping the intensity high.

AS: That could be it, good point.

MD: I know you are starting to do a lot of soundtrack work for movies and television. I would assume that has you listening to more soundtracks and scores. What is some of your favorite soundtrack music?

AS: I love anything from Michael Giaccino. He has done a lot of the Pixar films, and his scores are incredible. Johnny Greenwood's score for *The Power of the Dog* is wonderful, as is Hans Zimmer's new score for *Dune*. Of course, anything by John Williams or Trent Reznor gets my attention. Cristobal Tapia de Veer did the music for *White Lotus* and that is a very imaginative score. I love the score for *Soul* by Trent, Atticus Ross, and Jon Batiste and I have always liked the score for *Taxi Driver*.

MD: So, after a long career as a jazz sideman, leading a jazz group (Migration,) becoming a Grammy award winning and sought after soundtrack composer, and now with the *Bad Hombre* band and project, what's the next step?

AS: I need to solidify the *Bad Hombre* concept and keep going in that direction. My dream is that I could use some music from a band in Morocco, and then do the same thing with some music from India for instance, I could do some very cool experiments as a producer and conceptualizer like I did with *SHIFT*.

MD: That sounds like what Peter Gabriel has been doing with his music and his Real World Studios. You and Peter have to hook up and collaborate. Like I said at the beginning of this interview, you are making music that sounds a lot like the music that he has been making with *Big Blue Ball, Passion, Long Walk Home,* and *OVO: The Millennium Project*.

AS: That would be a dream come true, Peter is such a creative person... What it comes down to is this: culture is at an all-time low. In today's world there is so much crap out there on TV, on the radio, and in social media that creative music -and creativity in general- when it's done well, is a form of protest. Today, creativity is actually a form of counterculture against all of the mediocrity and greed that is out there. People want to be famous, and people want to become celebrities, and that is having a terrible impact on the world. Thankfully, there will always be people who want to support creativity, but it's getting harder and harder to reach those people, and it's getting harder for those supporters to find creativity to support.

MD: I agree. There has got to be a *SHIFT*!

I have discovered that there are many ways to sustain intensity and creativity.

Check out Antonio''s drummer profile page, at modern drummer.com

DISTURBED'S METAL GROOVE MASTER: MIKE WENGREN

Alex Kluft

Story By Mark Griffith • Photos By Alex Kluft

The popular American hard rock-metal band Disturbed has been around for more than 25 years, they have released seven studio records and two live records. Their first recording entitled *The Sickness* is a true metal classic. Like every other band, singer David Draiman, guitarist Dan Donegan, bassist John Moyer, and drummer Mike Wengren haven't had much else to do for the last two years or so, *thanks to Covid.* So why not spend a ton of time working on and writing your next record? That is exactly what Disturbed did. The new record is called *Divisive,* and it is proving that Disturbed is back with a vengeance.

Pearl
PEARL
DISTURBED

MD: I didn't know that Disturbed was (sort of) founded by you and your guitar player Dan Donegan. Why are so many modern metal bands started and led by drummers?
MW: Maybe it's because we are always the guys that have vans big enough to transport everyone's gear. Let's face it, when you are starting a band if you have a van or (even better) a PA, it doesn't matter how well you play, everyone wants you in their band, you're golden. Actually, we didn't become Disturbed until our singer joined, but yes, Dan and I were the originators of the band.
MD: What is your drumming background?
MW: I am 100% self-taught. I got a job to buy my first set, and I started listening to records and tried to emulate what I was hearing. I tried taking lessons when I was younger in the basement of my elementary school, but all the teacher wanted me to do was rudiments. It wasn't even close to being fun, but the teacher suddenly died, and I stopped taking lessons. I pursued lessons a few years later but I got into a car accident and had to stop. It felt like every time I started getting drum lessons, something bad happened.

After that, I got really serious about listening to Motley Crue records, I was watching what Tommy Lee was doing, and trying to do that. At that time Tommy was the epitome' of the "rock drummer." He seemed like a cool guy, he had great chops, and he was a great showman. I wore out several cassettes of *Shout at the Devil*. I loved the tune "Red Hot," "Live Wire" and the tune "Shout at the Devil." He had some cool breaks in those tunes, and he was doing some cool double bass drum stuff.

As I got better, I got into heavier music like Testament, Megadeth, and Metallica. Then Pantera came on the scene and that was it. They were a game changer for me. Vinnie Paul was very powerful and innovative. Sure, he was playing fast, and he was playing heavy, but man could Vinnie lay down a groove! And that's what I wanted to do.
MD: Was this around *Cowboys from Hell*?
MW: When that came out, I didn't even know there were any Pantera records before that. I found out about *Power Metal* and *Projects in the Jungle* and the earlier stuff later. But I can play tunes like "Cemetery Gates" and "Walk" in my sleep because I listened to and played them so much. At that time, there was no room in my heart or brain for anything else but Pantera.
MD: You were influenced by two drummers early on that were great groove players. People always talk about Tommy's showmanship and all of that, and Vinnie's double bass drumming, but they both have a huge groove.

Rafa Alcantara

MW: I'm glad that you said that because that's an excellent point, they both have a great groove. That might actually be Tommy's biggest attribute in drumming, his groove. As far as I am concerned, both Tommy and Vinnie are groove masters, and that is what I was always attracted to in their drumming.

I saw those two bands every time they came through town. Everything that they did, I wanted to do. This was about the time that I started jamming with Dan Donegan. He was into Van Halen and Alice in Chains. Dan has a great rhythm guitar groove.

There was a self-storage complex outside of Chicago that all of the bands rehearsed at, and Dan and I met there and just started to jam. Dan would always show up early for his band's rehearsal, and I would always show up early for my band's rehearsals. Because we were both there early, we started to jam together. We both noticed

that we were always the first ones to rehearsals, and the last ones to leave. We could tell that not only could each of us play, but we were dedicated enough to show up early for rehearsals. And we have been together ever since.

MD: What a valuable point. You guys bonded over your dedication to music and your respective bands. That's very cool! You mentioned seeing Pantera when they played after you had listened to them a lot. What did seeing them play provide that listening to records and tapes didn't?

MW: We saw them at The Aragon Ballroom in Chicago. That was a 4,000-seat ballroom, it's where everyone played. When they played first their first note it caused this massive explosion of energy, it reverberated through every cell of my body. I knew that if I could ever get to that level of playing, it would be a dream come true. Dan and I saw that show together and we still talk about it like it was yesterday. The energy and the power of that show was amazing. I felt like I wasn't just going to see Pantera play a show, I felt like I was there as a student, to be taught, it felt like music school.

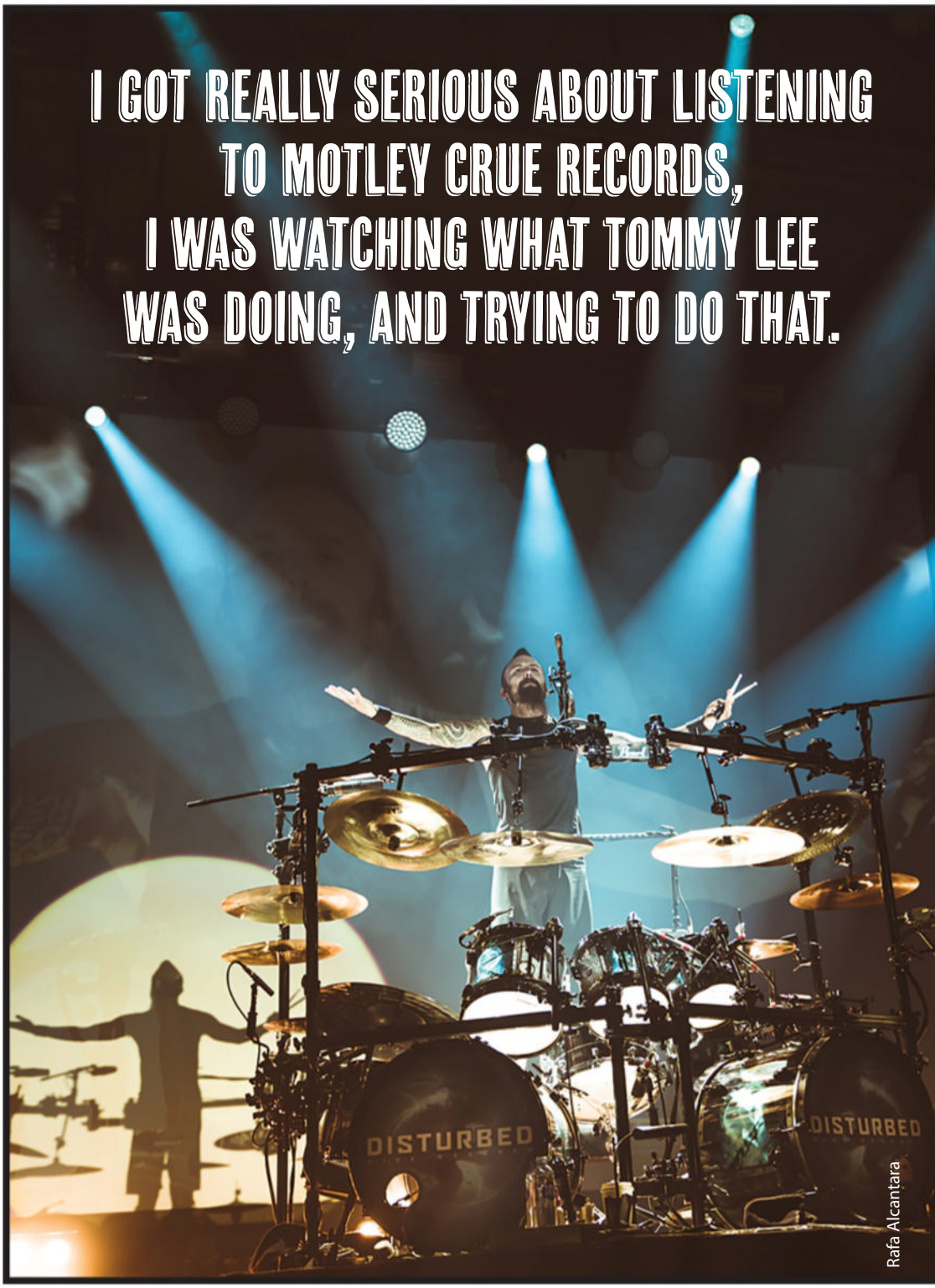
MD: Expand on that a bit. It's cool to hear that you felt like seeing a show was like going to school. What else did you learn from seeing and hearing those guys live?

MW: When you are younger and you are rehearsing with your band, you have moments that you look at each other and think, "We are kicking ass, this is IT!" You start to puff your chest out a bit, you think you are pretty good, and your band is playing great… Then you go and see a concert by legends like Pantera, and you watch what they are doing. Then you look at each other and say, "Man, we really suck, we have a lot of work and practicing to do!"

MD: That's what it's about, learning to do something by watching the masters.

MW: Then, ten years later when we got signed and we played Ozzfest, Pantera was headlining, and we were a mere second stage act and green as could be. But the guys in Pantera were so cool, they just took us under their wing. Not only did they teach us early on what music should sound like on stage and how tight a band could be. But then they taught us how to be on the road. It wasn't about ego, it was a brotherhood, it was a family. They were great mentors to us in Disturbed.

We have tried to carry on that tradition. You can ask any band that has ever come out with us, and I think they would say the same thing about us. I hope they would talk about how well we treated



Rafa Alcantara

them. That was ingrained on us early on by Vinnie and Dime, and it just became a part of who we are. We didn't try to do that, it is just who we are. Sure, we love to have a good time on the road, but it is always about camaraderie and music.

MD: I always say, "If you are *trying* to be a nice guy, then maybe you really *aren't* a nice guy."

MW: You can't force it, absolutely! The Pantera guys were some of the best in the business!

MD: What of the other masters were you influenced by?

MW: Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Black Sabbath, those are the bands that laid the groundwork for bands like us to do what we do today.

MD: You mentioned Black Sabbath, I have been on a Black Sabbath-Bill Ward binge for the last few years. For some reason I never listened to him much when I was a kid, what is it about Bill Ward that you like?

MW: Unfortunately, I was sort of the same way. I didn't really appreciate his style when I was young. He was pretty "jazzy." I was into more foundational and groove stuff. Bill Ward went over my head when I was young. I respected him, but his approach was a little beyond me (at the time.) As I got older and matured, I guess I got to the point where I understood his playing more. Now I go back and listen to the older Sabbath stuff, and I am amazed. I can't believe that he didn't get more respect. He was playing circles around guys, many years ago.

> I FELT LIKE I WASN'T JUST GOING TO SEE PANTERA PLAY A SHOW, I FELT LIKE I WAS THERE AS A STUDENT, TO BE TAUGHT, IT FELT LIKE MUSIC SCHOOL.

For me, I almost think like a part of my brain was lying dormant until I became musically equipped enough to open that door so I could let that information in. Otherwise, if I tried to let that information in, it would just bounce off the door.

MD: Were there any other major drumming influences back then?

MW: Scott Travis, who is now in Judas Priest. As I started listening to heavier and more complicated music, I started listening to the Mike Varney Shrapnel Records stuff. I was listening to a lot of the instrumental guitar players like Vinnie Moore, Jason Becker, Marty Friedman, and of course Racer X. I first heard Scott Travis when he was in Racer X, they were HUGE for me. When he joined Priest, it was a dream come true for me. I already loved Judas Priest and now they had one of my favorite drummers in the band. When I heard him playing the drum intro for the song "Painkiller," *forget about it!* He just elevated the whole thing.

MD: How is your new record *Divisive* different than previous records?

MW: We have kind of (in a way) come full circle. They always say that you have your whole life to write your first record, then the records that follow the first one might lack motivation or material. For us, there was never a shortage of motivation. We have spent 25 years building a career as a band, then Covid pulled the rug out from beneath us (and everyone else.) We felt like we had something taken away from us, we were upset, everyone was. We were not able to do what we love and what we live for, for the two years of Covid. I know it could have been much worse, people were dying, but that's how it hit us.

When Disturbed works best, we have to be in the same room together, we have to be able to see the expression on each other's faces. We have to feel the hair on the back of our necks stand up. We have done it both ways, but being in the room together is how we work best. Danny was writing riffs for two years, so when the travel restrictions lightened up, we could not wait to get into a room together and jam. The central location for us all to meet, jam, and record was in Nashville, so that's where we went. All it took was us all being there together, and everything started to pour out of us. We are pissed off, the state of the world is pretty ridiculous right now. And because of ALL of that, *Divisive* sounds like the older Disturbed records.

MD: Why record in Nashville?

MW: The band is generally based out of Chicago. I'm in Wisconsin, producer Drew Fulk lives in LA, some guys in the band are in Florida. Because we all have families and younger kids, logistically Nashville was a perfect central location to meet and record. It's also a music hotspot now with a ton of amazing studios, so that helped too.

MD: What drums did you use on the record?

MW: I'm not a huge gearhead, I play today what I have used my whole career: Pearl, Sabian, Evans, Vater, Humes and Berg. When the companies offered me endorsements and to join their roster of artists I did. I feel most comfortable playing the set that I play every day in the studio.

When we record, producers like to stack drum sounds anyway. They all have their favorite samples. I try to find a happy medium. My drum sound doesn't have to be the most organic drum sound, but I don't want it to sound overproduced either. For me it's about getting the best tone and sound, for the record.

MD: What would you say is the percentage of real drum sound vs. samples?

MW: I don't think that Drew will ever tell me the answer to that question. I'd like to think that there are more live drums in there, but producers are like magicians they don't share their secrets.

MD: Let me ask about a few tracks from the record. What is going on in the powerful "Hey You?"

MW: That tune came from one of Dan's guitar riffs? He started playing a riff, and boom, we all jumped in. I like to lock in with him and play syncopated kick drum ideas with his syncopated riffs.

> DANNY WAS WRITING RIFFS FOR TWO YEARS, SO WHEN THE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS LIGHTENED UP, WE COULD NOT WAIT TO GET INTO A ROOM TOGETHER AND JAM.

MD: I'm glad that you brought up rhythm guitar. I love to ask drummers about the importance of rhythm guitar.

MW: For me personally, sure you have to lock in with the bass player no doubt. But I came up listening to rhythm guitar. Mick Mars from Motley, Dime from Pantera, they were serious rhythm guitarists. When we play live, the rhythm guitar is the loudest thing in my mix. The bass is just underneath the rhythm guitar, but I have to lock in with the rhythm guitar first.

Dan and I have been playing together for a long time, and we

started out leaning on each other and connecting with each other. That meant when the bass was introduced, we were already hooked up and the bass sort of met us in the middle.

MD: That's a great way of explaining it. What's going on in "Bad Man?"

MW: That was a fun one, it's one of the heavier songs on the record. We can't wait to play that live. Unfortunately, we haven't had a chance to play it live, because we don't want a song's first impression to be from someone's little iPhone video from a show. I'd rather someone hear a song for the first time from the recording that we spent month's making.

MD: How about the title track "Divisive," that's pretty funky.

MW: There is a hi hat pattern on that tune that I don't usually play.

MD: What do you mean?

MW: When I am playing hi hat, I am usually playing a syncopated kick drum part, and I often lead my double bass drum playing with my left foot. The way I taught myself was if I am playing a down-beat it's a right foot, if I am playing an up-beat it's a left. I also like to play all of my parts with a double kick, whether it's a fast part or not. That doesn't always free up my hands to play a closed hi hat pattern. Of course, I have a closed hi hat on my right, but that usually used just for straight quarters or eighth notes. So that song freed me up to play a slightly different hi hat pattern than I usually do.

MD: Aside from creating beats and grooves, how involved are you in the writing process?

MW: It's pretty collaborative. Songs usually come from one of Dan's riffs. But sometimes I come up with a beat first, and we go from there. We will always go back and lock parts in a little more, or switch things up. Lots of times the instrumental parts are easy, but then we have to make adjustments to fit the vocals in.

MD: How do you do that?

MW: You have to "sparse" things up a bit. Pull different sections back because you don't want to step on the vocals. It's a process. When we are writing and after we get the first rendition of the song, we go through and dissect it. We really analyze every note and every beat. We make sure there is enough space, and we make sure it's locked in. Then when David is tracking his vocals, I like to sit in the back room alone, and come up with higher harmonies for him. I like older

Rafa Alcantara

music with great harmonies, so I naturally hear those parts.

But that goes both ways because when I am tracking drums sometimes the guys will make suggestions about beats and fills. It's always fun when you have a non-drummer tell you how to play something. Seriously! Sometimes some really cool stuff can come from non-drummers. But other times I have to say, "I'm not an octopus, I don't know how you expect me to play that, but I'll certainly give it a shot.

MD: When you are coming up with a part to match a riff, are you filling in the blanks between and complimenting Dan's notes, or are you generally thinking about playing basically the same rhythm as Dan?

MW: As we all know, the drummers most important job is keeping time. You have to be aware of time and space. Some riffs call for me to emulate the riff and to really lock in with the kicks. Other times if the guitar is playing more open, I will do the same thing and keep my part more open.

When Dan and I jam, I know that once other parts or elements come it, I'll have to take some parts out. I'm not the biggest "chops" guy. For me it's not about ego, lots of fills, or whatever. It's about what's right for the song! That's my thing. I'm not a soloist, I like groove, I like the people in the audience to be able to bob their heads to our music.

MD: Who are some of your favorite groove players (besides Tommy Lee and Vinnie Paul?)

MW: I really don't listen to a lot of new music these days. I don't want to insult any of the newer bands because there are a lot of great bands and talented players out there. I live in the world of metal when we are writing and touring, but I like to change things up. The thing that gets me grooving is the old classics. I love 70's rock. I like all the "geographically named" bands like Chicago, Boston, and Kansas. I like the Eagles, their harmonies are fantastic. Those are all legendary bands. But I think that unfortunately if a lot of those bands were young today, they might not even get a record deal. Too much music today is repetitive, similar, and sort of homogenized. In my opinion, there isn't a wide range of identity out there.

MD: You have a nice room here with a lot of equipment, can you tell me about some of the drums on these shelves?

MW: This hand-painted set is the set from our Indestructible tour. It was airbrushed by Nubbie from Orange County Choppers. That kit stays here at home. The rack of snare drum rack has a newer Black Beauty, a Tama Bell Brass, a bunch of Pearl wood snares, a Pearl Steel shell, a DW Steel, and a Ludwig Epic wood. The drum kit on top is the first drum kit that I ever played. My uncle played drums in a wedding band. When I was about eight, we would go to his house, and I would sneak into the room where he had that kit set up. One day, he came in and caught me looking at his drums. Instead of yelling at me, he said, "Why don't you show me what you got?" He wanted me to play them! Then he started giving me pointers. Many years later, I bought him a new kit as thanks, and he gave me his old kit.

MD: What are your favorite recording and live snares?

MW: Live, I used to use the Pearl Steel all of the time. But now they have a hybrid Kapur and Fiber shell. That is a great live snare. I like crack and response from a snare, so I tune really tight and high. I have started using that in the studio too. It just works really well. I bring a bunch of snares with me every time we record, but we usually end up using either the Ludwig Black Beauty, the Tama Bell Brass, or (now) the Pearl Hybrid. But every drum will sound different depending on who hits it.

MD: Do you remember what snares that you used on what songs on this new record?

MW: No. I'll be truthful with you. I love to create songs, and I love to see a song grow, I love to groove, but when it comes to recording, I don't really like that process. Going for take after take… That is not enjoyable to me. There is always a technical problem, or a drum goes out of tune, or something… I can't stand the start-stop-start-stop aspect of recording. There is no such thing as momentum for me when I'm in the studio.

MD: No one has ever been truthful enough to say that to me. What you are saying is you aren't going to retire from Disturbed to become a session drummer?

MW: Never! I play drums because I love the band, and I love the final musical product that we create, but I don't think I would have the patience to do this with anyone else.

MD: When you tour, do you play to a click live?

MW: Yes. But I am the only one with a click in my mix, and the rest of the band plays to me. I just keep it on for a reference, I'm not burying the click for the entire show, but it does help me stay locked in with some samples that we use during the show. I lay back on some sections of certain songs, and I will play on top sometimes too. I like to sound human. Sometimes we will put a click in everyone's ears instead of me counting off a tune, it makes it look like we are all magically in sync.

FOR ME IT'S NOT ABOUT EGO, LOTS OF FILLS, OR WHATEVER. IT'S ABOUT WHAT'S RIGHT FOR THE SONG! THAT'S MY THING. I'M NOT A SOLOIST, I LIKE GROOVE.

MIKE'S GEAR

Pearl Reference drums: two 18x22 Bass drums, rack toms in 8, 10, 12; suspended floor toms in 14 and 16 on my right, and an 18" floor tom on my left. That is what is in the picture, but on this new tour I might be going with 10, 12, 13 rack toms, and 16 and 18 floors and maybe a gong drum on the left, we are still figuring that out.

Sabian Cymbals: from left to right: 14" AAX Stage hats, 18 AAX Metal Crash, 18" Holy China, 19" AAX Metal Crash, 19" AA Rock Crash, 19" AA Rock Crash, my remote hats are 14" AA Metal X Hats, 17" AA Rock Crash, 19" AA Xtreme Holy China, and my ride is a 23" Vault series Override. That ride is one of my favorite cymbals ever, especially in the studio. I also love the AA Rock Crashes.

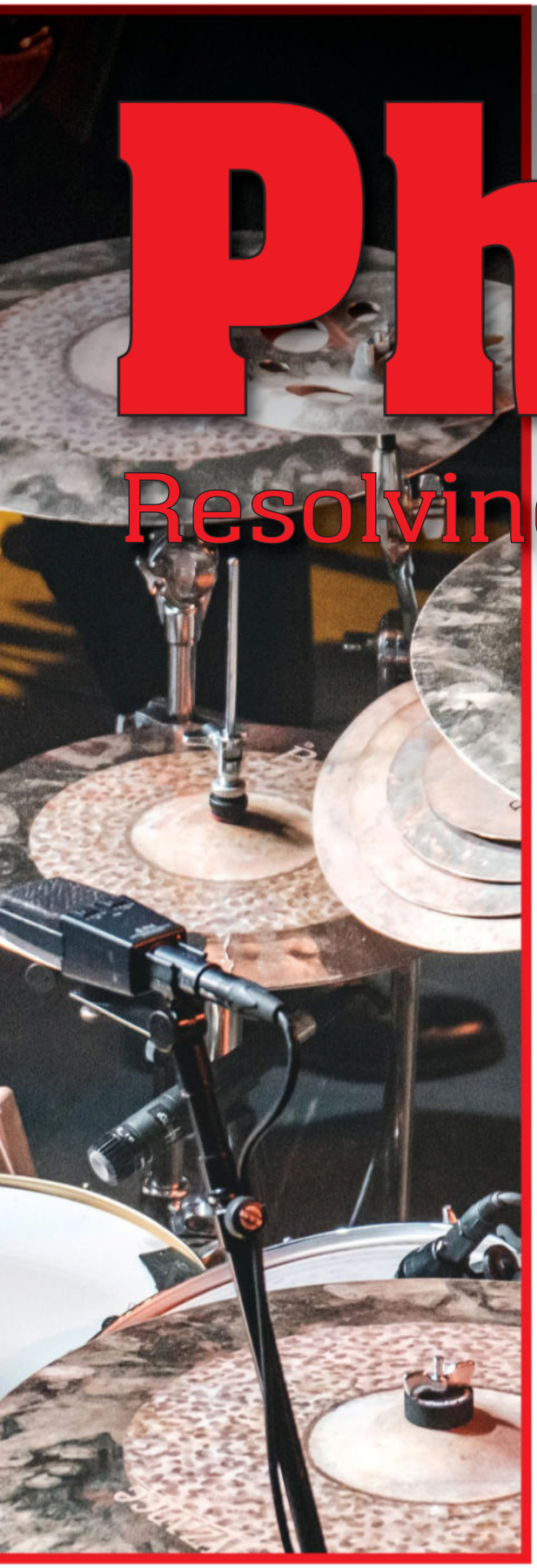
Evans Heads: Toms, Clear EC 2 on tops, and G1 on bottoms, bass drums have Clear Emad 2, snare ST Dry.

Vater Sticks: Mike Wengren signature model, and **Humes and Berg Cases** have been with me for a long time.

MD: Do you like playing with a click?
MW: It's second nature for me. Dan kids me that when we are in a car, and I turn on the turn signal, I subconsciously start playing a beat along with the clicking of the turn signal.
MD: I do that with the windshield wipers or with ticking clocks. How about the song "Don't Tell Me" from the new record, I hear something different in there.
MW: You are hearing Ann Wilson from Heart singing on the track. David thought we should do a vocal collaboration on that tune, and he didn't even entertain the question of "who should it be?" He called Ann, and she was down for it. We were blown away! It was a proud moment for us.
MD: Coming from Chicago, has the Chicago musical tradition played a part in you or the band's sound or development?
MW: When we came up there was almost two different scenes, there was the downtown pop scene with Smashing Pumpkins, Veruca Salt, and Local H, but we were considered to be too heavy to be a part of that, so we played on the southside and in the suburbs. That was a great and very supportive scene. We all supported each other. If you didn't have a gig one night, you went to someone else's gig to support them, it was great. I live in Milwaukee now, and there are some great cover bands up here, and some really talented musicians.
MD: Speaking of covers, Disturbed has done some fantastic covers like Simon & Garfunkel's "Sound of Silence" and Sting's "If I Ever Lose My Faith in You." Who brings in the cover suggestions?
MW: We all do, when we decide to do a cover, we each bring in a list of tunes, and then it gets decided from there. "Sounds of Silence" was actually my idea. Growing up, my father was a huge Simon & Garfunkel fan. On Sunday's we all had our chores to do, and while we cleaned the house, he would have Simon & Garfunkel playing in the background. After I suggested the song, (our singer) David took it to another level, and we went orchestral by adding some piano and strings.
MD: I know that the new record just came out. But you mentioned a new tour, when are you guys heading back out?
MW: It will be in 2023, everyone is out touring right now, some people are doing well and some aren't. There is a whole new set of logistics now. Gas is still really expensive and tour buses are tough to get. But we'll be going out early next year.

Check out Mike's drummer profile page, at modern drummer.com

Emilio Herce



Philo:

Resolving into Comfort

By Mark Griffith

The Mars Volta has been an influential band for a long time. Throughout that time, they have had quite a few influential drummers in the band. Blake Fleming, Jon Theodore, Deantoni Parks, Thomas Pridgen, Dave Elitch, Willie Rodriguez Quinones, and now introducing… Linda-Philomène Tsoungui (also known as Philo.) So who is Philo, and where did she come from?

The answer is a long and very interesting story. Philo is a 30-year-old, highly educated drummer from Germany, with a very interesting and tumultuous background in classical percussion that resolved in a career playing drumset.

MD: It's rare that a drummer that we have not heard much about bursts on the scene with such a big and influential band like The Mars Volta. Your road to that gig is a very interesting, with some interesting twists and turns that some of us can relate to. Can we talk about the road that led you to The Mars Volta?

PT: I played mostly classical percussion until I was 24 years old. My mom found a teacher who was a classical percussionist. He taught his students to become classical soloists or percussionists. Fortunately, I was drawn to classical music, and I was listening to it a lot at the time. It is the only type of music that I can *always* listen to. At the time the prestige and the elite vibe around classical percussion and music was quite appealing to me. When I seriously got into it, I was 14 and in the process of finding myself, so that all made sense. I was trying to find out where I belonged, so the feeling that your ability on the instrument was the only thing that really mattered was very appealing to me.

Early on I was aware that I had to make a choice. Music and drumming was either going to be my hobby, or I was going to take it very seriously. I made the decision that I was going to be all about music, and classical music and percussion would be my future. I didn't want to be average. I kept studying classical percussion for the next three years before I went to university. There I wanted to study with Peter Sadlo. He had a big reputation, and he was known as a soloist and an educator. I wasn't put into his classes when I made it into university, but that didn't stop me. I still sought him out, I would sneak in lessons, I was asking him questions, I was always asking to be a part of his projects. Over a course of four years, I think my determination helped me play a way into his heart.

That was a very hard four years. People always ask me about the *Whiplash* movie, and I tell them, "That's sort of how it is." I dedicated my whole being to playing music and school was intense. It was a constant sequence of practicing a piece, playing it for a teacher, getting hardcore feedback, practicing it more, receiving more hardcore feedback, giving a small concert of what we had learned, and then put that in our repertoire and move on to the next piece. In school you had to choose whether you wanted to become a soloist, play chamber music, be a classical percussionist for an orchestra, or be an orchestral timpanist. The classical scene is very competitive, and the places where you can get a job in an orchestra are super limited. In an orchestra there are maybe five or six

Emilio Herce

percussionists who are employed, and those positions don't open up regularly. When they do, the competition is crazy, you have to hold yourself to the highest of standards.

MD: I can absolutely relate. When I was young, I was *briefly* thrust into the classical percussion world as well, but I realized very quickly that I wanted to be a part of the drum set world, and I pursued the drumset.

PT: It's good to know that you know the drill. The jazz department was next door to the classical department, and after 3 years of coexisting with it, I was beginning to get very interested in it. I was in the beginning of my twenties when one day a jazz major came up to me in the halls of the practice building while we were each taking a break. He told me that this guy named Robert Glasper was playing in Munich. I wasn't familiar with Robert Glasper or drummer Chris Dave at that time, this was around the time of the first *Black Radio* record. At the time I had gone to very few pop or pop culture concerts or events, up until that time I would only go and hear classical music. These jazz majors had an extra ticket so I went to the show with them. I can easily say that night and that show changed my life!!!

That was the first time I had seen only black people on stage in real life, that was a profound experience. But the way the musicians on stage were acting was profound too. They were so loose, so into the music, they were enjoying themselves, the people on stage and the audience was having FUN! I always viewed a classical music concert like an athletic competition. The harder it looked the better. The fact the Robert Glasper's band was so relatable while they were on stage was mind blowing to me. There wasn't that weird hierarchy between the people on stage and the people in the audience. There was an interaction, the entire club was one symbiotic organism, I had never felt that. That night my entire idea of performing classical music just collapsed. I made up my mind when I was 14 that I wanted to play classical music. But at the age of 22 I had changed my mind. I wanted to be a drummer in a band. I wanted to be a part of that, I didn't want to feel like I was on an island playing super-hard music, I wanted to be a part of that interactive thing that I had felt seeing Robert Glasper.

> "Whenever I found a drum pattern in a song that had to be there no matter what, I would practice it with a click away from the music, just to get it down"

That year I asked the college to help me make the transition into the jazz department, they offered me drumset lessons for 30 minutes every other week, and the school said that was the best they could do for me, but I took whatever I could get. I took it as another fight worth fighting to get where I wanted to be.

MD: What an awful way to treat a student in today's world.

PT: After I practiced classical percussion all day, I would wait until everyone else had gone home, and I would have the opportunity to practice drumset for an hour, and it was FUN! During those years I started meeting and hearing drummers like Jost Nickel, Anika Nilles, Claus Hessler, Benny Greb. I was immediately struck by the fact that these super top drummers were very down to earth people. They were nice and super into sharing ideas. I realized that all of those drummers had a link to Udo Dahmen who started the Popakademie in Mannheim.

MD: That is like the German version of Berklee right? You can go there and study popular music.

PT: Yes. So I got out of Munich, and went to Mannheim to the Popakademie to study the drumset. When they accepted me, I was still trying to figure out how the drumset actually worked. I put a lot of time in focusing on coordination and sound. They were the things that were the most different from my classical percussion background.

MD: Did you have any experience with playing drumset before you started pursuing playing the set at Popakademie?

PT: Not really. People always ask me if I had played drumset before going to Popakademie and my answer is kind of strange. At college I had sat at the constellation of instruments called the drumset, and I had played it. I had read sheet music, drumset parts, and charts… But essentially I had no idea how to play THE DRUM SET.

I grew up in the small conservative Bavarian town of Hof. We had a theater, an orchestra, and a ballet. The presence of that culture made me want to be a part of it. At the same time my mom was very into Erykah Badu and she tells me that as a kid I loved the Soulquarian music that Questlove, D'Angelo, and Erykah Badu were making. That led me to ask my mom about the drums. But since the music scene in my town is so tied to the theatre and orchestra, I ended up going to a classical teacher.

MD: It's interesting that you mention that your mom remembers you liking the Soulquarian music when you were very young, and then the show that changed your life was Robert Glasper. Because that is all coming from the same musical place. It's possible that without even knowing it, your mind subconsciously made that association. But it's amazing that between those two events that were years apart, you had didn't have much experience in playing the drum set. You said that when you finally got to Popakademie and started studying the drumset, you started studying coordination and sound What do you mean by that?

PT: In classical music you don't have to deal much with coordination. I had good technique, but not drumset technique. I had to apply what I had learned from classical technique to the drumset. I also had to figure out sound and tuning. In college, I would take out a snare drum from the storage area and practice my snare drum stuff. If I didn't like how it sounded, I would take it back to the storage room and grab another snare drum. I had to learn to tune the drums in both the way that I liked the drums to sound, and in the more accepted (and generic) way that drums should sound for studio gigs.

At Popakademie I started with super basic stuff. Ted Reed "Syncopation," the Jim Chapin book. Then I went to the Gary Chaffee and Gary Chester books. With those books, you have to think creatively. That was new. The biggest lesson that I learned was practice wasn't about showing your teacher that you could play something. It was about figuring things out for yourself, figuring out what and how you wanted to play. The teacher is there to tell you if you are on the right track, and to give you inspiration. Practice is not only about getting better, it's about figuring out what you want to do. In classical percussion you never have really

think, you always have someone telling you what to do, what to think, and if something is good or not. But at the Popakademie I was left alone to figure out what I wanted to do.

Then I started studying with Claus Hessler. He is the best teacher that I ever had. His realm of knowledge is so huge. He knows everything about the drums and he knows everything about the body. All of his students can play the craziest stuff and look super relaxed while doing it. He teaches a lot of Moeller technique which helped me a lot. His collapsed rudiments help you really squeeze everything out of every rudiment and idea. He stresses that until you have done everything there is with a paradiddle, you haven't really mastered it.

MD: That is so true. When you come upon a nice musical idea, you can play it "as written," backwards, inside out, shift the accents, whatever… You can (or should) spend a lot of time really exploring a single idea.

Emilio Herce

PT: Claus has also really brought odd subdivisions, polyrhythms, and odd times to the next level. But as a student, the trick is to filter what you want, for how you want to play. I knew that I didn't want to be a super complicated fusion drummer, but Claus' stuff still helped with coordination.

At Mannheim, overall it was really about the community of the drum class. Everyone was showing everyone something, and everyone was inspiring everyone else. Everyone was pushing themselves, but it wasn't in a competitive way. It was a supportive, positive, and loving environment.

MD: The Chaffee stuff is far reaching, what did you do specifically?

PT: *Stickings* and *Time Functioning*. That's what I spent the most time on. It blew my mind and was very helpful.

MD: Once you started studying drumset, did everything come and progress quickly?

PT: It didn't feel like it. I am very self-critical, and I was pushing myself really hard. But as I look back, I started getting gigs after my second year in Popakademie, so maybe I sounded better than I thought.

MD: Were you listening to a lot of music and drumming during that time?

PT: I listened to my teachers because they were all very good players. And whenever someone was coming through town to play, Udo would always try to get them to give a workshop or a clinic at the school. I remember seeing Richard Spaven; Chris Colenburg, and Zach Danziger to just name a few. I also shared an apartment with another drummer and he was into Ronald Bruner and Mike Mitchell. I was more into Brian Blade, Marcus Gilmore, Mark Collenberg, and Justin Tyson at the time. We would sit in our kitchen and watch all of those guys on YouTube.

MD: What did you learn from watching them?

PT: All of them have very conscious use of dynamics and vocabulary. None of them uses too much or too little of anything. And they can move and shift between all of the subdivisions easily and smoothly.

They all seem to incorporate the soul of Elvin Jones in their playing. But it wasn't in *what* they played, it was *how* they played that inspired me. I could always tell that all of those guys really "mean it." And that's what Elvin represented to me. He "meant" everything he played. Whether it was the simplest subdivision or the most complicated polyrhythm, he meant it. That's what speaks to me the most. I love when drummers speak through their instrument, and when their playing becomes truly *inexplicable*. When all of those guys play, they are always staying true to the "heavy beat." But that heavy beat isn't always some external thing that is generated by a metronome, it is internal and in comes from deep inside.

MD: The inner clock is essential for a great drummer. How long was it from when you first started at Popakademie and when Covid began?

PT: Roughly three years of studying and doing gigs.

MD: Then during Covid you buckled down, what did you focus on during Covid?

PT: When Covid hit, I had the time to zoom out and look at what I had been working on, reflect on who I had been working with, and examine everything that I had been doing at the drumkit. I had been

so busy preparing for the next gig that I didn't have any time to really improve. But during Covid, I rewired myself to how I was when I was first studying classical music. I found what I needed to work on, and how I needed to improve during that time.

I thought that I wanted to focus on chops. But what I wound up working on was sound and my internal mix at the drums. And I really focused on how my body actually feels while I'm playing and how I wanted to set up my kit. Up until that point, I had never really paid much attention to how I set up my drums, what sticks I used, none of that. I set up my kit like everyone else did and I used 5As because that was the first pair of sticks I ever got introduced to. During Covid I spent time trying to figure out what truly felt comfortable. I really wanted to find out how I could be even more comfortable at the drums, and what my body type was dictating to how I should set up my drums. I experimented with seat height, bass drum spring tension, and the height of my snare drum.

MD: What kind of adjustments did you make?

PT: When I sit at my drums, I want it to feel like I am sitting in my comfortable chair in my living room. I had been sitting too high, and psychologically that always made me feel "on the spot." I lowered my throne and raised my snare drum. I wanted to be able to play a rimshot at any time without raising and shrugging my shoulders. I now sit relatively low, I have my snare relatively high, and I can relax my shoulders and play consistent rimshots. If I want to play something more delicate, I only have to make a very slight adjustment and lift my hands slightly higher.

I learned that if you have one tense part of your body, it effects how your entire body feels. I think that's a very important thing for drummers to know. I started to try and eliminate all of the tension in my body. Sure, when you get nervous you might tense up. But I wanted to have a foundation of no tension. I want my position at the drums to be inviting for all of my muscles to be relaxed. That opened a whole universe for me. If everything is relaxed, my posture is good, and everything is "in flow," all of the harder coordination stuff suddenly starts to work and become easier.

Through setting up my drums differently and making sure my posture and my body was in flow, I had better control over my muscles, and that made me a better player. It seems super simple, but it's not the type of thing that you get taught at school. When we had special workshops about that at school, they were only one day events. We were all young and silly and just said "Yeah whatever, I just want to play drums." But that bodywork is really important.

MD: How low are you sitting?

PT: If you have the highest point and the lowest point on the throne; I sit a little lower than halfway between those two points. I didn't do anything extreme. I always try to keep the angle between my hips and my leg a little more than 90 degrees.

MD: We have finally worked our way up to present day. How did the Mars Volta gig materialize?

PT: The CEO of the label that Mars Volta is signed with, Johann, found me on Instagram, and he texted me. He was looking for new people to work with so I went to Hamburg to meet with Johann and we got along great. I think he saw similarities between Omar and me, and eventually he introduced me to Omar. Omar flew to Hamburg, and we hung out for about ten days jamming and recording stuff. We got to know each other. They had already completed the new record, and he asked me to play drums on the tour.

MD: What music are you playing on the tour?

PT: We are playing two new songs and lots of older stuff.

MD: How did you learn their music? It's pretty complicated music, did you write out charts?

PT: No I didn't chart the music out. I do that sometimes, but with harder music, I would rather listen to the music until I know it, and then start playing along to it. I made a huge playlist of songs, and I rated their difficulty from 1 to 10. I didn't want to overlook any of the songs, and I wanted to prioritize the harder songs. Then with the harder songs I identified the hardest parts of the songs, then I listened to those harder parts over and over from both the studio and the live recordings.

Through listening and talking to Omar, I realized that he had asked me to do the tour because he wanted me specifically, not a replica of someone else. That gave me the self-confidence to figure out what parts had to be the same, and what parts could be different. Whenever I found a drum pattern in a song that had to be there *no*

The biggest lesson that I learned was practice wasn't about showing your teacher that you could play something. It was about figuring things out for yourself, figuring out what and how you wanted to play.

matter what, I would practice it with a click away from the music, just to get it down. I also prepared myself to play the songs faster than the recordings as some live recordings on YouTube were a lot faster than the studio versions.

MD: What are some of your favorite tunes to play, and why?

PT: "Eriatarka," "Cicatriz," "L'Via," and "Cygnus....Vismund Cygnus." I like how "Eriatarka" let's loose at the end, after having a difficult drum pattern during most of the tune. We get to jam during "Cygnus" and

Emilio Herce

"Cicatriz" and and we love doing that.

MD: How comfortable are you improvising?

PT: I am very comfortable improvising with that constellation of musicians on stage. And I love accompanying Omar's solos. I think we perceive things in similar ways. When he plays, I know what he's "*saying*" and what he's going to "*say next.*" I know when he wants me to *push*, and I know when he wants me to *give him space*. Everyone in the band is incredible, and everything is working so well on and off stage. I'm so happy to be in a situation with such a wonderful family of musicians, we have a lot of trust and love for each other.

MD: What was the hardest song to learn, what one really kicked your butt?

PT: I guess "Cicatriz ESP." I have a lot of respect for that song. It has a very stoic groove, but it's also very delicate and super busy. It has a little bit of everything condensed into a one- bar drum pattern. It's super repetitive and that can be difficult. Though all Mars Volta songs seem to have hard sections that get resolved into something very comfortable.

MD: How are you approaching these songs differently from Deantoni, Thomas, and Jon?

PT: I approached the music with respect to the legacy of all of the drummers that have played before me in The Mars Volta. After that, I have the opportunity to give it my own touch. We all have different sounds, and I think we all feel dynamics in a different way. I am always balancing serving the music with being given the freedom to express myself within the music. For me, that freedom often comes from dynamics and nuance; for other players it might be something else that is also completely legitimate and most likely perfect for whatever the music wants in that moment.

MD: How has your early musical training prepared you for this gig?

PT: I have played under pressure a lot during my musical life. All of those situations have helped me prepare for this gig. Before this tour, everyone wanted to know who was playing drums in the band, it was a big deal. I knew everyone would be watching very closely. But all of the previous musical situations have prepared me for this.

MD: Speaking of pressure, you actually played "Music for 18

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Musicians" for Steve Reich didn't you?

PT: Yes! The Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra was curating a series of concerts for Steve Reich's 80th birthday, and we played that piece in one of them. He gave us feedback during the rehearsals and sat in the audience for the concert. *THAT* was a lot of pressure! After that I knew I could do *anything*.

MD: After this tour what's coming in the future?

PT: I will live in the momentum of this tour and experience, and will most likely do some creative work with my new found friends and family. I have also been doing some producing. I have created a bunch of electronic music with my modular setup, and I have the Sunhouse triggers that I use with my music. I have just done a remix project of a jazz duo that will be released in December, but other than that I just haven't found the time to finish and release some of the projects that I have been working on. I would like to do some film or TV music too. I am generally open and willing to do anything musically.

MD: How do you compose?

PT: I come up with things on the modular. That instrument has opened up a creative realm that I haven't had before. You can feed it (for example) harmonic and melodic information. Then you can twist some knobs or change some patch cables and enter unknown territory. So I will find a sound, or a melody, or a sequence that I like, and I record it, then mess around with it. When I like it, I take it to my practice space and jam to it. Then sometimes I put the recording back into my modular and start the whole process again. That's why it's so hard to finish stuff, it just keeps going.

MD: What modular components are you using?

PT: My go to is the Make Noise Morphagene Granular Sampler and the Make Noise Maths.

MD: Who are some of your favorite composers?

PT: Steve Reich, John Cage, Johannes Brahms, and there is an endless number of contemporary composers that I like, I'm afraid I would miss somebody. But I have to mention OneOhTrix Point Never is doing some really exciting stuff.

MD: Who would you like to work with in the future?

PT: I would love to work with Erykah Badu someday. I like the humanness, the purity, and the spirituality of her and her music. As you can probably tell, I thrive on positive human interaction. I also would love to play with Esperanza Spalding because of all of those same reasons.

MD: What kind of gear are you playing?

PT: Tama built me a Star Maple kit in a gold finish, and it's the most beautiful kit ever. I have a side snare that is 8x14, my main snare is 6x14, both snares are Maple. My set is a 7x12 small tom, 14 x 14 and 16 x 16 floor toms, and a 14 x 20 bass drum.

MD: Why the 7" deep tom?

PT: The shorter depth means that I can move it anywhere, and the depth won't interfere with placement. My small tom is over the bass drum a little bit so that one inch less makes a difference in positioning. I might also move to a 22" bass drum for this gig, so the seven-inch depth will help in tom positioning if I start using the 22" bass drum.

I am using the Evans Hybrid snare heads on both snares. When I tune those heads super low, they are really fat, but if I tune them up high, they still have a nice crack. The kick head is an Onyx, and the 12 and the 14 get EC Reverse dots. My 16 has a 16" bass drum head on it.

My cymbals are usually MeinI Byzance and I like the driest cymbals they make. But for this tour I switched to the Byzance Duo. Going from left to right, I have a Benny Greb Sand Crash for rolls and delicate stuff. I use 16, 18, and 19 Byzance Duo crashes. My rides are a 20 and a 22 crash-rides, and then I have the new Smack Stack, and the Matt Gartska Stack above my hi hat and the Matt Gartska 18" Fat Stack above my floor tom. My sticks are ProMark 7a Rebounds, with an acorn tip.

> I thought that I wanted to focus on chops. But what I wound up working on was sound and my internal mix at the drums. And I really focused on how my body actually feels while I'm playing and how I wanted to set up my kit. Up until that point, I had never really paid much attention to how I set up my drums,

MD: Are you still living in Berlin? What's the music scene like there?

PT: It's a diverse and vibrant music scene. Berlin is getting gentrified like every other major city, but compared to other big cities in the world, artists can still afford to live there because it's *relatively* cheap. We have a big underground music scene. There are lots of places to play. As an artist it's getting harder and harder, but there are a lot of art spaces and gallery's that you can play.

MD: What recordings can we check you out on?

PT: I played with Zouj on his record *Tagat*, and I did Teri Gender Bender's last record. Those are the two latest releases that I have done.

MD: What are some of your favorite records to listen to?

PT: Robert Glasper *Black Radio,* Bloc Party *Silent Alarm*, Flying Lotus stuff, and Moses Sumney with Ian Chang on drums. I also love the *James Farm* record with Joshua Redman and Eric Harland. That is the first CD that I listened to constantly and everywhere. I love listening to The Meters, and I love two artists called Contour and L'Rain that I just saw recently in Washington DC.

MD: What drummers have you heard recently that have blown your mind?

PT: Jharis Yokley from New York City and a German drummer named Silvan Strauss. Silvan puts his whole being into his playing. Seeing him play is a beautiful thing to watch. I've known him for a long time, and he's always been inspiring to me. Whenever I get too tense, or stuck in my own head, I just imagine Silvan playing. He's incredible!

MD: And so are you!

Check out Philo's drummer profile page, at modern drummer.com

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Rodney Elkins

The Food Stamps/Tyler Childers

By Bob Girouard

Emma Delavante

Emma Delavante

Pure and simple, Rodney Elkins is a groove merchant. Like many southern drummers he plays a little behind the beat; creating a deep pocket, perfectly embellishing critical points in the song, but never playing more than the song needs. Considering his young age, his maturity on the instrument is impressive. Stylistically, his playing echoes rhythm masters like Booker T's Al Jackson Jr. and The Band's Levon Helm. At the same time, Rodney retains his own musical identity. Rodney's use of dynamics is also notable, and the fact that his training on the kit is both formal and feel oriented, represents the best of both worlds.

Singer/songwriter Tyler Childers received a Grammy nomination for Americana Emerging Artist in 2018. Today he is expertly backed by Rodney's band The Food Stamps (consisting of Jesse Wells, James Barker, Chase Lewis, Craig Burletic and Rodney Elkins) on the recording *Can I Take My Hounds To Heaven?* It is Childer's latest release (Hickman Holler/RCA), and comes with an infectious blend of traditional country, folk, bluegrass, gospel, and even New Orleans influenced jazz. *Can I Take My Hounds To Heaven?* retains a spiritual edge without being overly religious, and according to Rodney, "Tyler's songs are just too good to ignore." Furthermore, with a rhythm section that's known each other forever and are at home with the nuances of Childers' writing, it's a win-win for everyone. *Can I Take My Hounds To Heaven* is currently on Billboard's top 100 country albums chart, peaking at #3.

If this sounds like a good old American success story it is. And whether success is measured in dollars or notoriety, it is always

Emma Delavante

gratifying to watch the artistic growth of performers who not only remain true to their roots, but who also refuse to be pigeonholed by labels or formulas. I have a distinct feeling that Rodney, The Food Stamps, and Tyler Childers will personify that objective for a long time to come.

Emma Delavante

MD: You originally hail from West Virginia. What was the music scene there like and who were your influences?

RE: We actually had a thriving music scene in Huntington, West Virginia. Around 2009-2010, me, James, and Craig from The Food Stamps started a trio called "Deadbeats and Barkers." We were just one of many groups playing music that we loved. At the time, Huntington was predominantly a heavy metal town, but the scene's hipness was created by the diversity of the people playing music.

MD: Rodney, you grew up in a musical family, playing in a band with your dad and uncles. Was the first instrument you learned to play the guitar?

RE: My dad taught me a "boogie-woogie" line on guitar and that was it. Honestly, I learned a lot from the 1991 Allman Brothers album, *Live at Great Woods*, with Warren Haynes playing that red Stratocaster. My father's band was (and still is) called The Elkins Brothers Band. They've been a band since the 1950's. They were my first music education. It was kind of like a "free country-western college." When The Elkins Brothers Band plays, various members of The Food Stamps come by to help out from time to time, just to keep The Elkins Brothers Band legacy intact!

MD: You were always drawn to rhythms, and you learned to play drums by trial and error. Does that mean that you learned by playing live on the gigs?

RE: Yes, pretty much at first that's how it happened. Then I realized I could take all the music classes in school that I wanted.

MD: Your very first performance was a memorable one for sure. It was at the Barboursville Senior Service Center dance, you made $150 at age 12… Not too bad! What do you remember about that gig?

RE: {Laughs} September 2000! The first thing I remember was getting to my uncle's house where they kept all the gear. I was automatically designated roadie for the night. I remember being told, "Boy we need to get all this gear into the truck." "Yes sir," I replied. That was my introduction, better yet, my baptism into "show-biz."

MD: Drum Corps also played an important role in your drumming development. What did you learn from playing rudiments in an ensemble?

RE: Yeah, I played in drum corps in high school and college. It's where I learned the inner workings and intricacies of my instrument.

MD: Did your classical and jazz training in college help in your approach to the music you're playing now?

RE: Absolutely. It gave me the discipline that I didn't have. It also helped me appreciate many different styles of music.

MD: Rodney, can you give us the skinny on how you and The Food Stamps got the gig with Tyler Childers? What are the origins of the band The Food Stamps, and what's the current music scene like in Nashville?

RE: I can't speak too much on the current scene in Nashville. I do know that the places that I frequent are filled with monster players. It's inspiring, but there's a bit of a "machine" mentality and a lot of folks get lost in it.

MD: I think the band's name "The Food Stamps" is very cool. How did that come about?

RE: Our friend, Jack Browning, was kind of the mayor (not officially,)

Rodney's Gear:

Drums: Ludwig, Three different kits, all in sizes: 14 x 20, 8 x 12, 14 x 14; and 6 ½ x 14 bronze snare drum. The three sets are finished in: Classic Maple, Vintage White Marine Pearl, and Black Sparkle (with a 16 x16 floor tom added.)
Cymbals: Bosphorus, 14" hats, 20" ride, 22" ride.
Sticks: Pro Mark 5-A.
Heads: Remo Coated Emperor.
Hardware: DW 6000 flat base stands, 5000-foot pedal.

of Huntington. He was the bartender at a club we played called Shoop's. It was our one-year anniversary there and he christened the name after suggesting that we should be Tyler's backing band.

MD: You once stated to a fellow band member at a Marty Stuart concert that you wanted to, "Play country music for the rest of your life." I would imagine that desire comes down to your innate love of the style of the music itself right?

RE: Playing country music changed my life. I decided right then and there that I was going to play country music in some capacity for the rest of my life and I wanted it to be with Tyler.

MD: Let's talk a bit about the new album, *Can I Take My Hounds to Heaven?* The album is recorded in three parts, with 24 tracks on three discs. There are eight songs that are are done differently on each disc. The different discs are called the *Hallelujah* version, the *Jubilee* version, and the *Joyful Noise* version. What does each version of the music mean to the listener?

RE: *Hallelujah* was played live in the studio. *Jubilee* is that same session with horns and other musical goodies added, and *Joyful Noise* is a re-mix of everything. All the music was done live on the spot. My part was to stay out of the way and just compliment and not overplay.

MD: In preparing to record the album, did you do a lot of pre-production or had you already been playing the songs in concert?

RE: No, the first time was in the studio.

MD: When you were in the process of recording did you have the freedom to create your own drum parts?

RE: Absolutely. We're all friends, we all talk about parts. We scrutinize, correct, or complement each other accordingly!

MD: This is the first time Tyler utilized you and the other "Stamps" on a record? How did you like recording in West Virginia.?

RE: Man, it was wonderful. It felt super comfortable.

MD: Right out of the box The Food Stamps sound like they've been influenced by The Band. In fact, the first cut, "Old Country Church," sounds like you're channeling Levon Helm. The groove reminds me a little of "Up on Cripple Creek." It also sounds like Garth Hudson could have played organ on that song. Your drumming is very organic throughout the whole album. No frills, but a groove as wide as the Grand Canyon. The song "Can I Take My Hounds to Heaven?" left a major impression on me. "Purgatory" has The Band's influence all over it, the opening horn lines remind me of *The Last Waltz*. That song also comes complete with a bass and organ solo. The way the horn section is arranged has a decidedly New Orleans feel to it. Finally, "Way of the Triune God" takes us to church with finely tuned gospel harmonies. This is damn good stuff!

The music that you play has often been described as neo-traditional country. Is this a sound that just evolved or were you aiming for a particular sound? In other words, your music encompasses country, folk, bluegrass, and gospel. With such diversity, it feels like you might be uncomfortable with any kind of "tags" attached to your music?

RE: Speaking of The Band, we are all huge fans of them. In fact, when we first started playing together, we bonded over their live record *Rock of Ages*. With regards to "tags," they're just labels that help people understand the music we play. Today, everything is so formulaic and it's hard to remain objective. I don't like saying, "I don't care for someone's form of expression." But at the same time, there's good music in every genre and I try not be too discriminatory.

Check out Rodney's drummer profile page, at modern drummer.com

The 4 Practice Pockets: The IREC Model

By Chris Lesso

"There is no right or wrong, only consequences."

It's so challenging to know just what to practice when we sit down at the kit. There is no *exact* right way, as long as we PLAY. Treat yourself as the ultimate life experiment! Try the model below, see what works and mold it to your own connection with your instrument. The journey is different or everyone. There's a flow as you go from one pocket to the next, but you can try changing the order or try doing a deep dive into only one zone. Use what works and discard the rest. Every day is different, because you are a new you every time you sit at the kit. This model is only a guide for you to spark your best self through drumming!

Intution (Your Creative Flow)

What's the first thing you can play on the drums, right now, straight from the gut? What's in your soul that you want to express at this very moment? Can you tell a story through the drums with clarity, heart, and emotion? Trying not to think but to just PLAY is a great way to start your practice and connect to your instrument. This process mimics real life expression; music is a language, we want to speak from the heart in real time, authentically and clearly. I like to record myself telling (playing) a short story on the drums. Listening back always reveals what I need to focus on, clarity, dynamics, time, simplicity, beginnings and endings, and creativity.

Reps (Train Your Body)

Drums are physical. You are an athlete! This part of the IREC practice model is where we refine the movements that serve our greater transformation. Our sound is created by movement, and for our motions to be automatic we must program the most efficient ones into our muscle memory. This is the conditioning that serves us best when we need it in the moment. By expressing our ideas and thinking as little as possible, we can drop into 'the zone' any time we like, that is the special place where our drumming comes alive.

Edges (Stretch Your Mind)

This is the pocket where we move mountains. When you drop into rhythmic flow there's not much thinking going on, ot similar to when when we walk or speak. But to learn how to get into the flow zone takes zooming way in to painstakingly work out the finer points. There's no way around it, this is THE WORK. That's why we call it *'the no fun zone!'* Greatness lies in the details; it takes patience to smooth out the wrinkles and to release anything that's not working for you. I call this *'the no fun zone'* because you need to accept that this is the part of your practice you're going to '*embrace the suck'*.

Discomfort is GOOD because that's when you're stretching yourself into the superunknown. You're now a fumbling beginner all over again, so don't expect to sound good (yet!) It's scary to dive in here, because this is where we face our deficiencies. And who wants to sound bad on the drums? No one. But this is true practice, because everything we've mastered today, was once unfamiliar and painful.

Celebrate (Feed Your Heart)

Now it's time to celebrate! We don't '*work*' the drums, we *play* the drums. You've earned this moment, and this section of the IREC practice is all for you. Reward yourself! This is our chance to dance in the playground and have fun like we're meant to do. So many adult drummers have a challenge with this, this is where we live out our inner child and let loose. Don't neglect this part of your practice! Tap into the joy of WHY you chose to play this instrument. You've done the work, and now we circle back to where we started; not thinking, but exploring with a sense of play.

Curiosity and enthusiasm is the fuel. Just jam! How much time should we put out in each pocket of IREC? That depends. When I've had a challenging day and need a lift from my drums, I've had entire practices of '***heart***' where I just jam and celebrate playing my favorite music. If I'm working on a big project with a deadline, I push my edges doing mostly '***mind***' work. If I'm in a highly creative space I flow into my '***creative***' pocket. If I'm delegating whole new movement to muscle memory, I give a lot of time to doing reps in the '***body***' pocket. Remember, the drums are there for YOU. They can be anything you need them to be. The goal is always LONGEVITY when we play the infinite game. There is no right way for everyone. Even when you've found a balance that works for you, expect it to constantly change as you evolve. Keep it fluid, keep it open, challenge yourself, and have fun on the drumming path!

To find your transformation through drumming, connect with Chris at ***chrislesso.net/ltrdrumming***

Check out Chris's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

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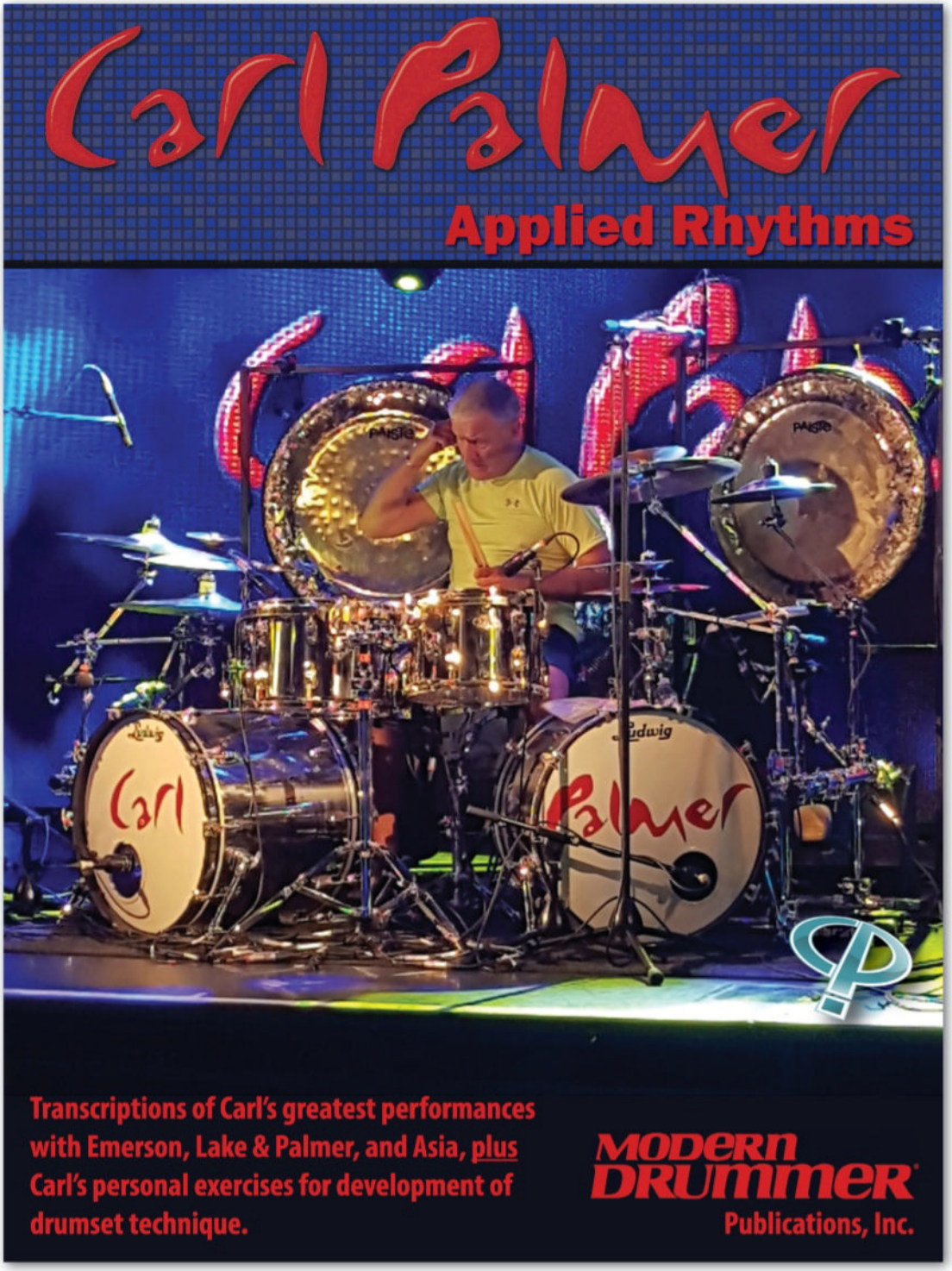

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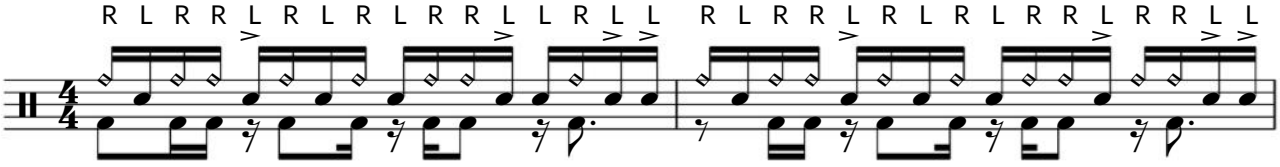
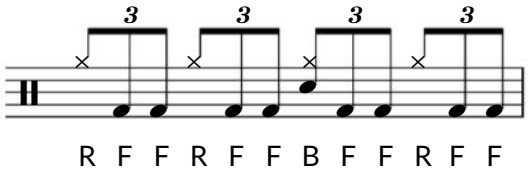
It's More Than Beats, Fills and Patterns

By: Thomas Pridgen

There's a Mars Volta song called *Teflon* that has a weird hybrid version of a paradiddle. A lot of Mars Volta songs have ghost notes with hybrid versions of a paradiddle. I use a lot of the rudiments and grooves.

1 Mars Volta "Teflon" Groove

The reason I show people rudiments is that playing drums is essentially doubles and singles. Most people don't play triplets with one hand, they play doubles and singles, A lot of times, drummers might say, 'I don't need to learn rudiments,' but learning rudiments sharpens the way you sound playing certain things. When you watch people on the internet, you hear them playing but you can't hear every note. They're not as articulate as drummers who sit there and practice a long time. Incredible teachers like Tony Williams and Ndugu Chancler would make you do double-stroke rolls in class for almost a year before you actually got to touch a drum set and that's so you know how to have articulation and not overlook the little things. It's easy to explain things from a rudimentary level. The rudiments were written based on what other people were already playing. When I went to Berklee I sharpened my rudiments. Rudiments give you so much more to practice and so much to strive for.

2 Triplet Bass Drum Exercise

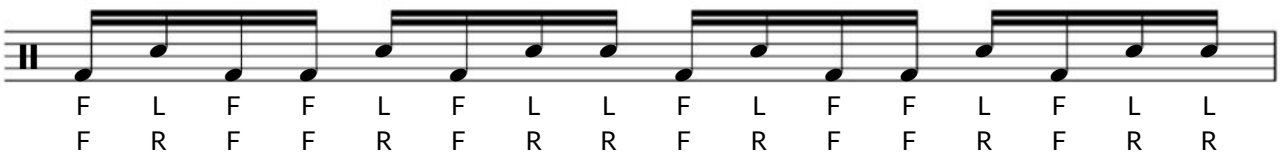


Regarding learning to play fast, I learned in church how to play fast doubles. After practicing a lot, I would do the opposite side of the beat. Then I would do triplets, the upbeat, and then I would do the downbeat, you could just keep moving up the numbers to fours, to fives, to sixes, and then you can actually put them together. Every time I heard a place to put a double I would put it. There's not just one way to practice playing faster.

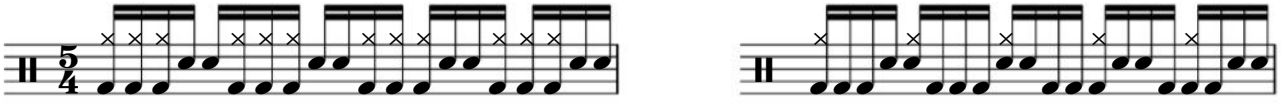
Ex. #3

3 16th Notes Single Stroke Bass Drum Exercise

I have a practice pedal pad at home and would do singles between the right hand and the bass drum and then you can do the left hand and bass drum.

4 Paradiddle Bass Drum Exercise

Courtesy of DW Drums

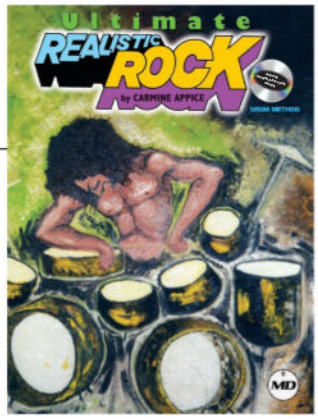
I would sit there all day and come up with ways to do a paradiddle between the bass drum. I literally have no way to tell you to do this besides to struggle with it. Practicing is one thing and foot placement is the other thing. I play with my heel up. It's like I'm tapping the footboard. The DW logo is at the ball of my foot. I'm not by the chain, but I'm not too far back. To find the right spot do sixteenth notes and slide your foot up and down the pedal plate. The place where you feel the most balance is where your foot goes. Seat placement also matters. I sit with my legs at a right angle.

5 Egg Beaters

R R R L L R R R L L R R R L L R R R L L

When it comes to playing linear patterns and phrases, I don't think about music like that. I think more like a horn player – these are expressions coming out of me. I look at drumming as phrases and melodies. The majority of the things I think about are figuring out how to play the phrases in my mind. For example, the egg beater is in 5. It's 3 on the right hand and 2 on the left. So, what I would try to do is put the bass drum with it. The thought is I'm developing these little things from a rhythm and a melody. When I play fills and I throw in the 7, this is not a lick or a pattern. This is me developing a thing off a rhythm and a melody. I'm building off something I'm hearing in my mind. You build a lot of vocabulary because no one is going to think about phrasing the way that you do. When everyone plays the same it takes the music out of it. Do the rudiments, learn the different styles, and then when you go on stage, you put yourself out to the world, because no one is going to hear the phrases and thoughts the way you do. I encourage you to sing on the drums and make music.

Realistic Linear Rudiments

By Carmine Appice



Modern Drummer is concluding the year-long celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Carmine Appice's legendary book *Realistic Rock*, which has been re-issued by *Modern Drummer* with even more sections and is now called *The Ultimate Realistic Rock*. We are presenting one of those new sections called **Realistic Linear Rudiments** that Carmine added to the new book.

In August's *Modern Drummer* we interviewed Carmine about his book, and this new Linear section. This is what he had to say, "Rick Gratton sent me his book called Rick's Licks, and when I tried to read through it, I really couldn't follow it. The way it was written was very confusing to me. Rick and I did a clinic together up in Canada, and when I saw what he was doing I told him that we should release a video together with my video company. I told him that his stuff was cool, but the way he explained it was just too complicated. We did a video together, but I helped him break down his ideas to make them more understandable. In the process, I came up with the Linear Rudiments: RLF, RLLF, RLRRF, RLRLRF. Groups of three, four, five, and six notes. Then you
combine different combinations of them to create groups of 16 (one bar of sixteenth notes) or 32 and put them all over the drums. I just clarified Rick's ideas and made them easier to learn. Then I began playing those ideas in clinics and on gigs. I saw how well they worked in a "realistic" setting. Then I incorporated those ideas into The Ultimate Realistic Rock book… Rick and I have since become good friends."

Realistic Linear Rudiments

The definition of linear is, nothing hits together. Until now we've played patterns where different limbs play at the same time as other limbs. The following exercises will give you a new outlook on playing and will open many new concepts for you to use.

These rudiments should be practiced slowly at first, and gradually speed them up. These could be called linear groupings as well as rudiments. A grouping is a group of notes that when played, create a phrase or a melody.

R= Right Hand L= Left Hand F= Foot

A. The three-note grouping is played RLF.
B. The four-note grouping is played RLLF.
C. The five-note grouping is played RLRRF, if-when it's repeated it alternates to LRLLF.
D. The six-note grouping is played RLRLLF.

Putting It Together

Let's put some of these rudiments (or groupings) together so we can use them as grooves and fills.

E. The seven-note grouping is played RLLFRLF. This is simply the 4+3 note groupings added together.
F. The nine-note grouping is played RLRLLFRLF. This is simply the 6+3 note groupings added together.

Then we can combine the 7 and the 9 to equal 16 (or a bar of 16th notes.) Repeat all of the above groupings over and over and very seriously because these groupings-patterns are the building blocks and the foundation for linear playing.

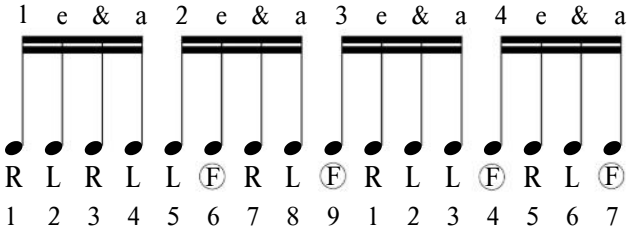
Use a metronome playing quarter notes to practice these examples!

All linear rudiments can be played as follows to create further independence. Practice all of them the following ways.

1-Rights are played on the bass drum (right foot when you see the F.)
2-Lefts are played on the bass drum (left foot when you see the F.)
3-Alternate feet or bass drums (if your first hit is a right the next bass drum hit, or F, is a left)
4-When alternating your feet, you can also use your left foot on your high hat.

How To Use These Rudiments

In 4/4 time there are 16 sixteenth notes to a bar. So let's start to count our linear groupings as 16 sixteenth notes. To do that we need two groupings that would equal 16. A good one to start with is the 7 and the 9. Together they equal 16 which equals one bar of sixteenth notes. The syncopation created by this combination is what makes this stuff interesting, fresh, and new. Below are some examples of this concept. Play them slow at first, then build up speed.



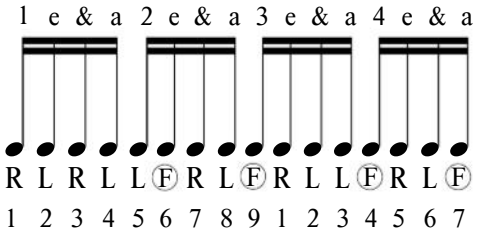
9+7=16 notes Repeat etc.

9 + 7 = 16 notes, or one bar of sixteenth notes.

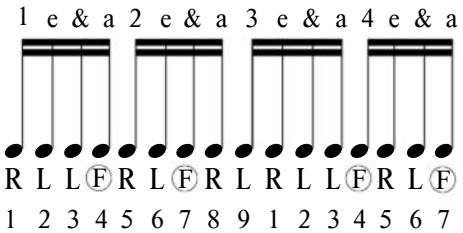
Two-bar phrases sound great using this same pattern. Here are some two bar combinations. These ideas consist of 32 16th notes.

1-Repeat the above example for two bars: 9 + 7 plus 9 + 7 and play over and over.
2-You can reverse this pattern to 7 + 9. It still has the same total of notes (16.) One bar equals 16 notes, and two bars equals 32 notes.

A)



B)



Here is the 9 + 7 (A) and 7 + 9 (B) sequences. Play A and B together as a two-bar phrase.
Try putting two bars of straight time in between the two-bar linear grouping patterns.

Once you get these patterns down, try putting your right hand on the high hat, and your left hand on the snare drum, and play the same exercise. Then try putting your left hand on the high hat and your right hand on the snare and-or toms. This will create a different variation of syncopated sounds.

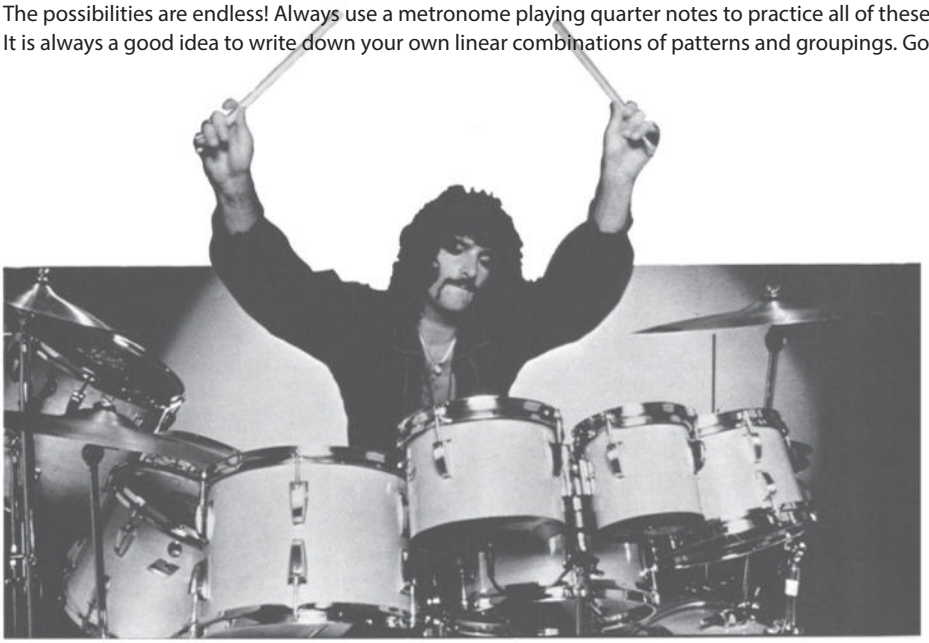
More Linear Grouping Combinations

One bar, 5 + 5 + 5 + 1 (one bar of sixteenth notes.)

Two bars, 9 + 9 + 7 + 7, or 7 + 7 + 9 + 9, or 7 + 7 + 2 + 9 + 7 (each adding up to 32 notes, or two bars of sixteenth notes.)

Four bars, 7 + 7 + 7 + 7 + 7 + 7 + 7 + 7 + 7 + 7 + 1 (or 9 x 7 + 1) adds up to 64 notes or 4 bars of 16th notes.

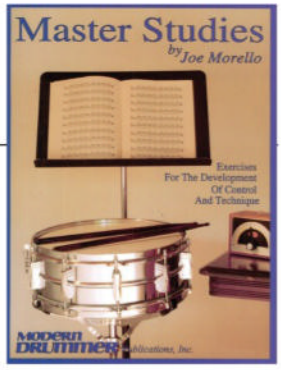
The possibilities are endless! Always use a metronome playing quarter notes to practice all of these combinations.
It is always a good idea to write down your own linear combinations of patterns and groupings. Good luck and have fun!



Check out Carmine's *Modern Drummer* profile page and his book collection at moderndrummer.com

On Technique and Progressive Accents

By Joe Morello



This month *Modern Drummer* is providing another excellent example of Joe Morello's masterful teaching from his essential book *Master Studies*. Both **Technique**, and **Progressive Accents** deal with the vital aspect of developing (and improving) your control while playing the drums.

On Technique

Master Studies is not intended to be a how to book. By that I mean that it's not an instruction book that will teach you various hand and stick positions, nor does this book have anything to do with any style of playing, nor is it intended to give the drummer some "hot licks." *Master Studies* is a workbook of material to use in developing the hands for accenting, and for controlling the different pressures used in single strokes, double strokes, and closed rolls. You can go through this book using whatever techniques you've been taught, and you can apply the ideas in this book to any style of music you want. Furthermore, this book does not have to be practiced in any particular order. You can skip around and work on whichever exercises are most appropriate to your needs at any given time.

Technique is only a means to an end. The goal is to play musically, but some drummers lose sight of this and approach the drums strictly from a technical standpoint. Often, they become so fascinated with speed that they miss the whole point of music. So just studying this book for the technique alone doesn't make any sense. You have to apply the technique to the music you are playing. If you need to use accents, for example, this book will help you develop the ability to put an accent wherever you hear one period but when you are playing. You should not be thinking, "Well now I'm going to play page such-and-such from *Master Studies*. The ultimate goal is to be able to play what you hear in your mind and to be able to play it instantly.

Although I am known as a jazz drummer, I never study jazz drumming with anyone. My teachers were Joseph D. Sefcik, George Lawrence Stone, and Billy Gladstone, who were not jazz drummers by any means but who knew how to get a good sound out of a drum. In my travels around the world, I've run into many different approaches and techniques. I think it would be presumptuous of me to declare my way of playing as being the "end all" of techniques. However, there is one thing that I want to make clear. I've come to the conclusion that everything is done with natural body movement. The wrist turns and everything have to be natural, they have to fit the way the body is made. You must use everything in a natural way. After you have been playing a while, you will develop an individualized style, and each style has its place.

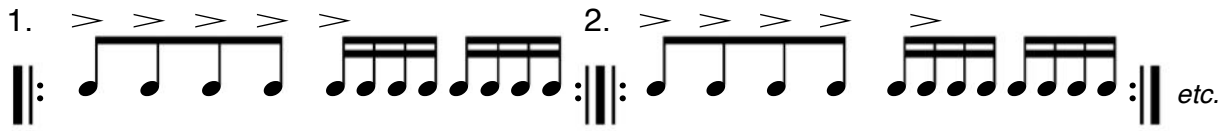
Some of the things in this book are unusual, and they might give you different ideas about things you can do. For example, some of the accents are in odd places, and in that respect, it might open your mind to different patterns. But ultimately, it's up to your imagination to develop your own creativity. So this book is just to help you develop your facility, keep yourself in shape, and help you become aware of what your hands are doing and how they're working. How you use the technique is up to you.

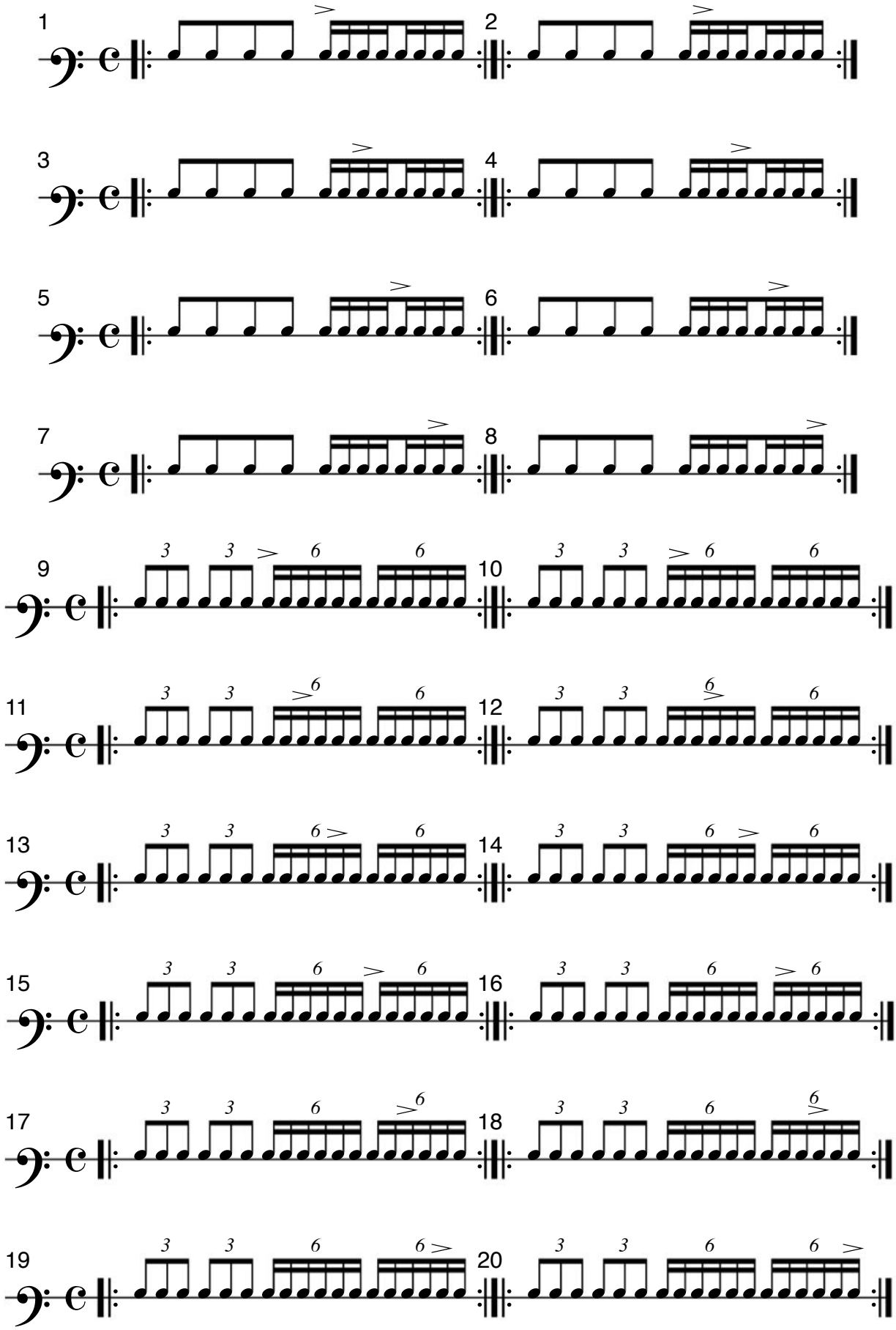
Progressive Accents

The idea of these exercises is to give you the ability to accent anywhere in the bar that you want. I would suggest that you start by playing this mf and really hitting the accents hard about *f.* Play each bar eight times and then immediately go to the next bar until you have reached the end. After you are comfortable with this, practice with various dynamic levels, for example:

Unaccented notes *p*, accents *mp*.
Unaccented notes *mp*, accents *fff*.
Unaccented notes *f* accents *fff*, etc.

Another way to play these exercises is with accents on the first four eighth notes throughout.



Practice these exercises using alternate sticking (RLRL,) starting with either your right or left hand.

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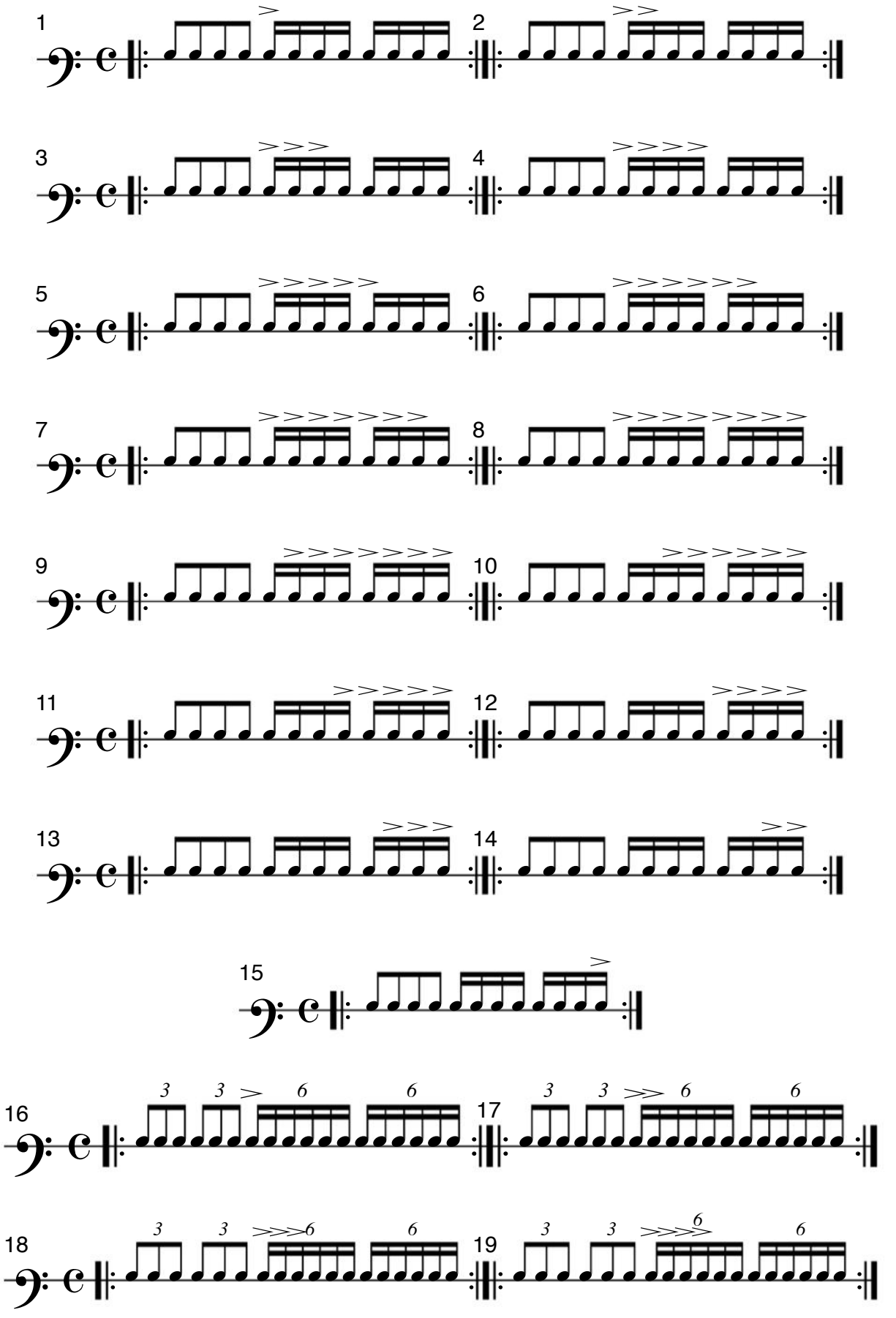
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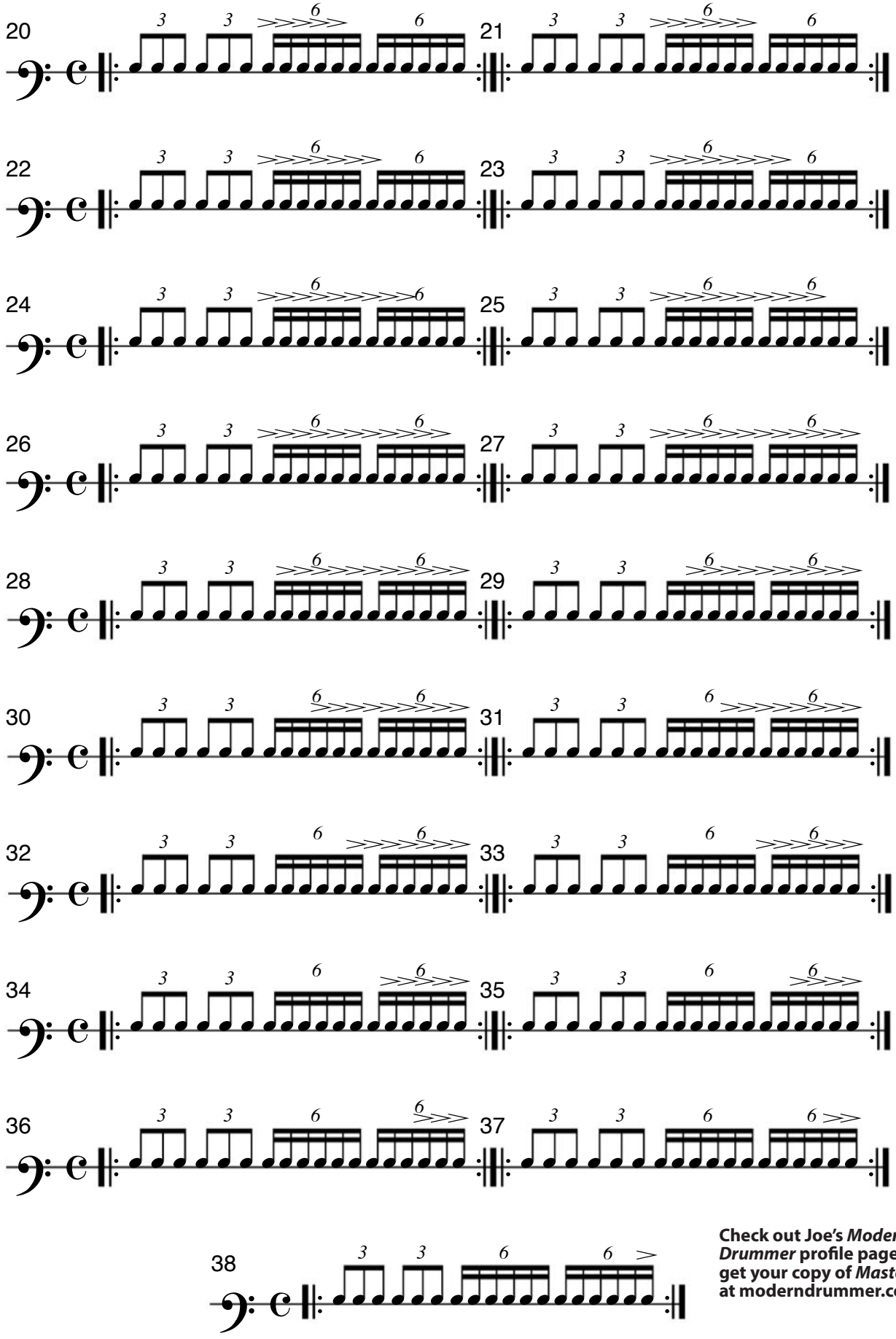
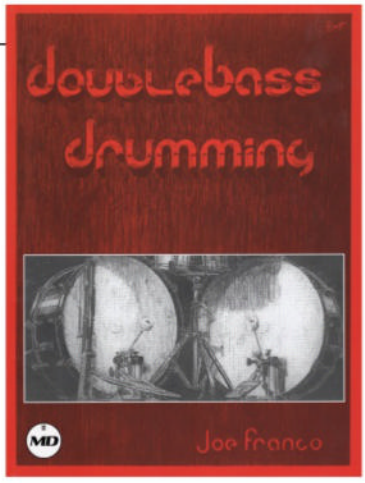

Check out Joe's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Master Studies* at moderndrummer.com

Mixed Sticking Patterns over the Double Bass Roll

by Joe Franco



This month we will continue with another excerpt from Joe Franco's groundbreaking book, *Double Bass Drumming*. This month *Modern Drummer* is including Joe's explanation of soloing over the double bass roll by playing mixed stickings with the hands.

The double bass roll is written at the bottom of each group of examples, to make the hand pattern clearer and easier to read. Although it is not mentioned in Joe's book, I would suggest practicing the hand patterns (stickings) alone first. Then put them over the double bass roll. Make sure to avoid any "flamming" between the hands and feet, and as always start slow!

In this section of his book, various hand patterns are played over the double bass drum roll. This month these patterns will be mixed sticking patterns, consisting of various combinations of single and double strokes. This article deals with both the sixteenth notes and triplets and is designed to:

-Present different hand patterns that are useful in soloing or developing beats.
-Develop hand independence over the double bass roll.
-Develop balance, control, and stamina on double bass.

There are many more examples of sixteenth notes and triplets played with mixed stickings included in Joe Franco's outstanding book entitled *Double Bass Drumming*. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Have fun!

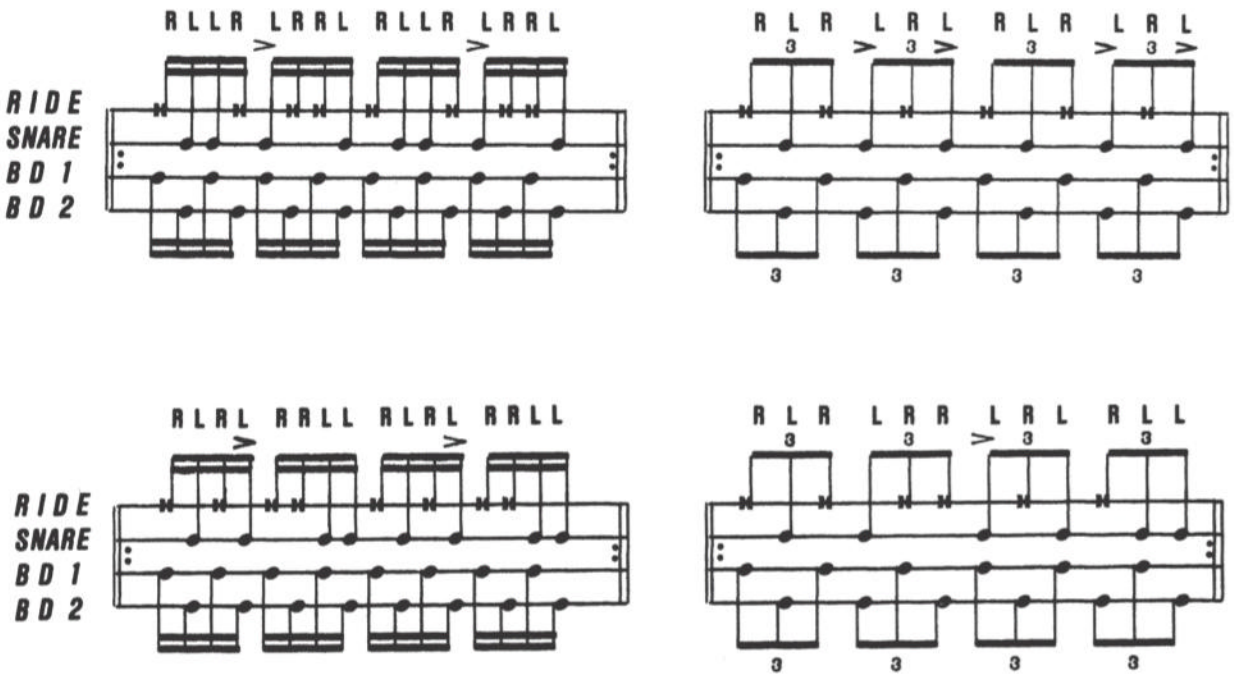
Mixed Sticking Patterns

Mixed sticking patterns are played over the double bass roll. These patterns can be used in soloing as well as in creating counter rhythms and fills. The patterns are written as R = right hand and L = left hand. Every pattern is presented with its mirror image (or reversed) in which R = L and L = R. It is important to play both.

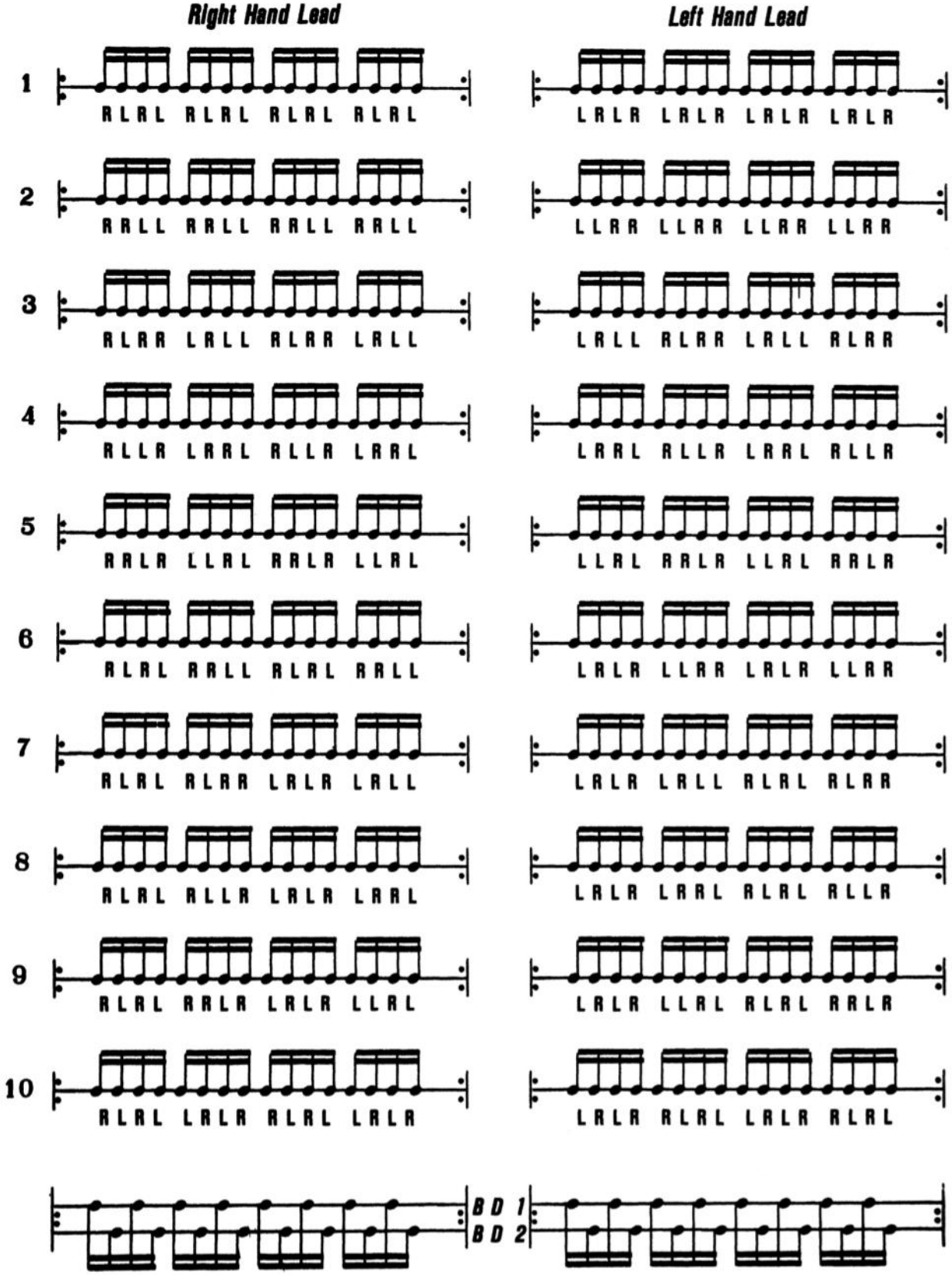
All of these patterns are composed of combinations of single and double strokes. All of the fundamental sticking patterns are included. The single and double stroke roll, the single, double, and triple paradiddle, the paradiddle-diddle, and many inversions of each. Since there are never more than two consecutive strokes with one hand, they should be able to be played with a constant flow.

Besides practical applications, these patterns are helpful in developing hand independence over the feet. You will be playing different combinations of hands and feet together. When working out these hand patterns, it may be helpful to play them on two different surfaces so you can hear the rhythm that each hand is playing. Keep in mind that these patterns are written without accents. Experiment with some of your own accents.

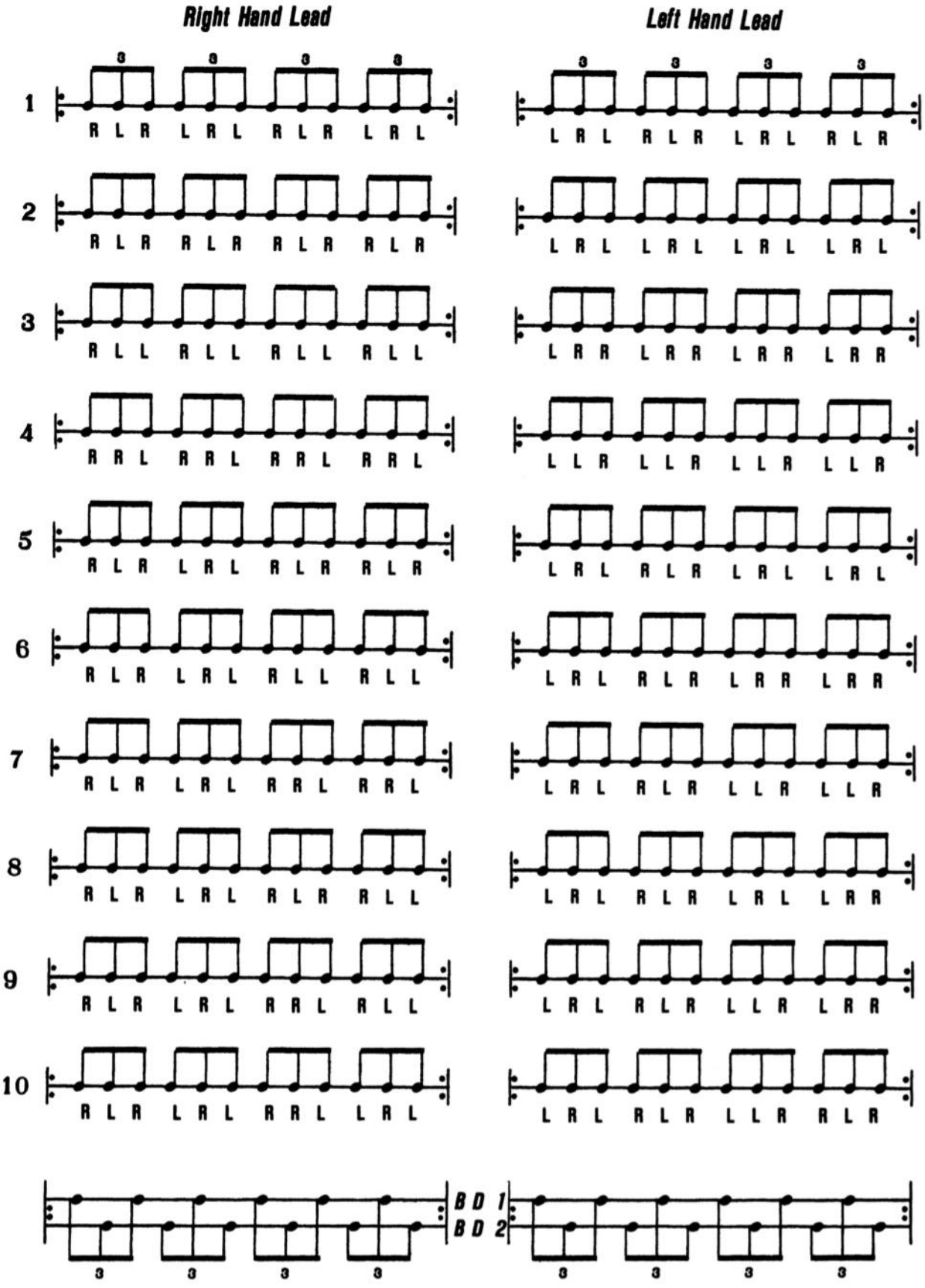
Besides using these patterns in soloing, try using them to form beats by playing R on the ride and L on the snare. For example:

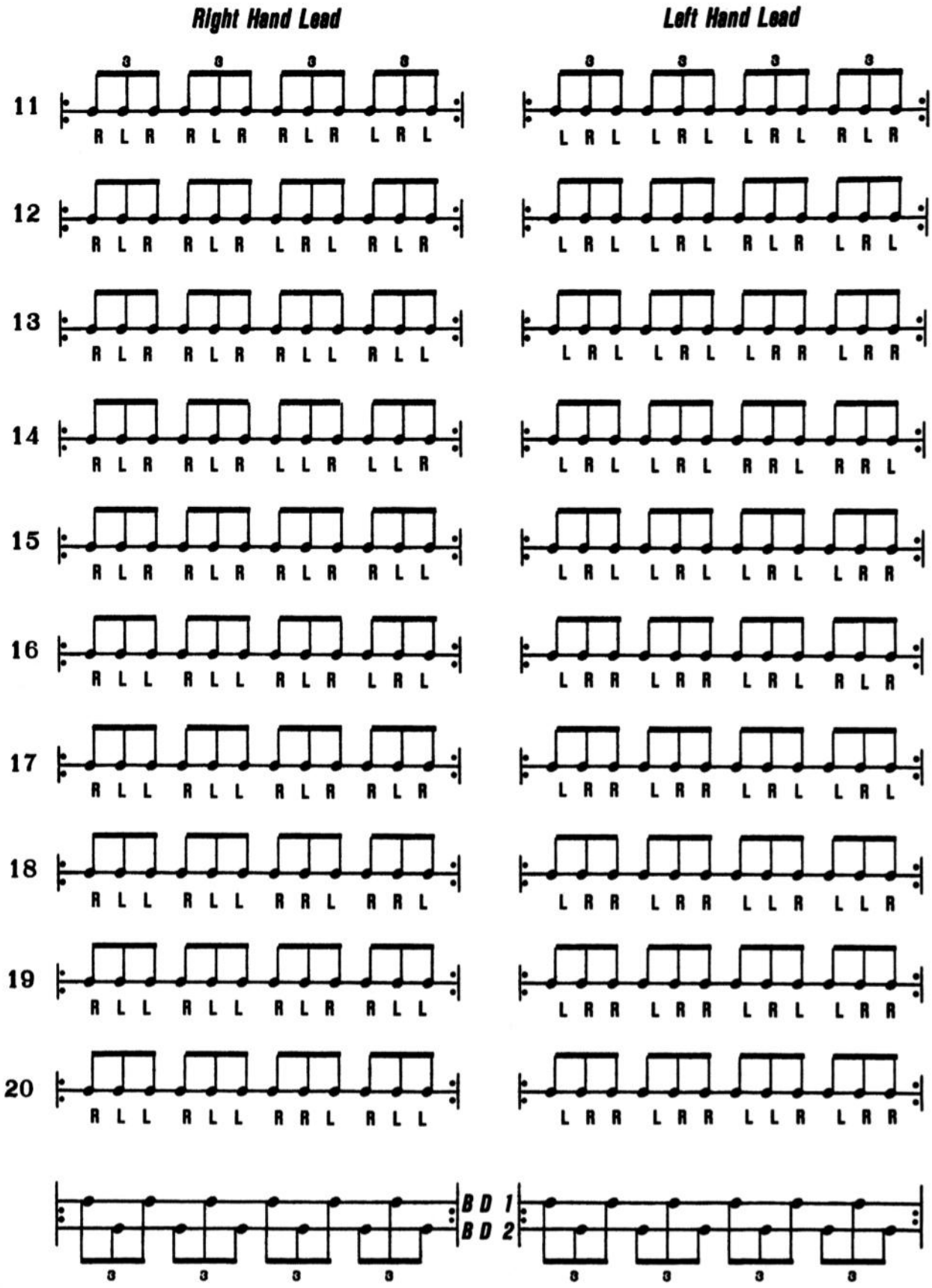


SIXTEENTH NOTES WITH MIXED STICKING



TRIPLETS WITH MIXED STICKING





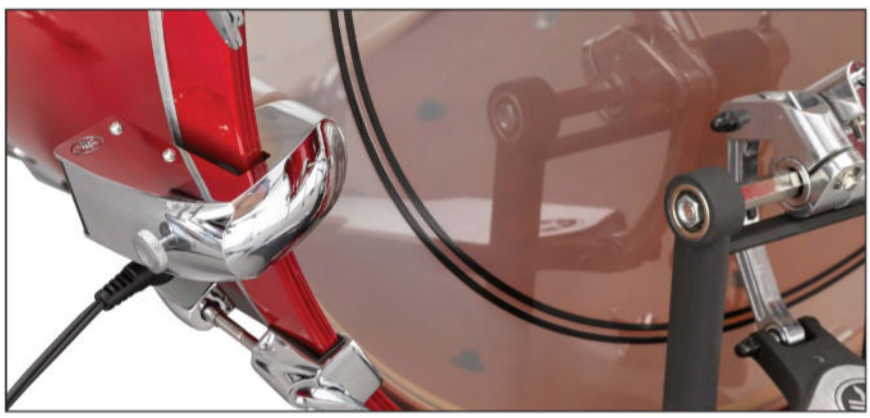
Check out Joe's *Modern Drummer* profile page and get your copy of *Double Bass Drumming* at moderndrummer.com

Hybrid Drumming / Bass Drum Trigger Exploration

By Tony Verderosa

Exploring creative possibilities with just one bass drum trigger is a great introduction to the world of hybrid drumming. In this month's column we will focus on an acoustic kick drum outfitted with a bass drum trigger. Hopefully this will spark some creative ideas for you to experiment with using the current trigger set up you have at home. Maybe a few of these video examples might even motivate some of you to purchase a brand-new MIDI drum trigger system.

A quick note about the MIDI trigger interface seen in these videos. It's a Yamaha DTX 900 and it was released in 2010. It's considered "old," and I believe it's now discontinued. Yamaha has released more current drum trigger modules but this one suits me just fine since I don't use the internal sounds, and the DTX 900 also has more advanced MIDI capabilities than some of the newer trigger modules. I am using a Yamaha DT50K Kick Drum Trigger on my bass drum.



This month my focus is on triggering custom samples, loops and sound libraries that exist on my Mac inside of Cubase. I also trigger hardware synths such as the KORG MINILOGUE XD which will be used on a couple of the videos throughout this article. Let's focus on the creative applications of midi drum triggering and hybrid drumming without getting lost in the weeds referencing specific midi drum modules. At the end of the day, we need to send midi note "on" messages from a bass drum trigger to access a computer which contains thousands of drum samples and virtual instruments.

Enhanced Kick Drum Example

The most obvious application for hybrid drummers is layering electronic bass drum samples with the acoustic kick drum to give the drum a new "dimension" and some added punch. On this first video example, I am using an 18" kick drum with the midi trigger turned OFF. **Here is an example** of just the raw drum sound, no layering, no MIDI, no extra samples.

Now let's look at the exact same drum groove, the only difference is that I am turning ON the MIDI TRIGGER to access some digital samples inside the Mac from a virtual drum instrument called BATTERY 4 by Native Instruments. BATTERY 4 is the cutting-edge drum sampler that includes a massive library of samples and drum kits for creative beat production. You can also drag and drop your own samples into BATTERY.

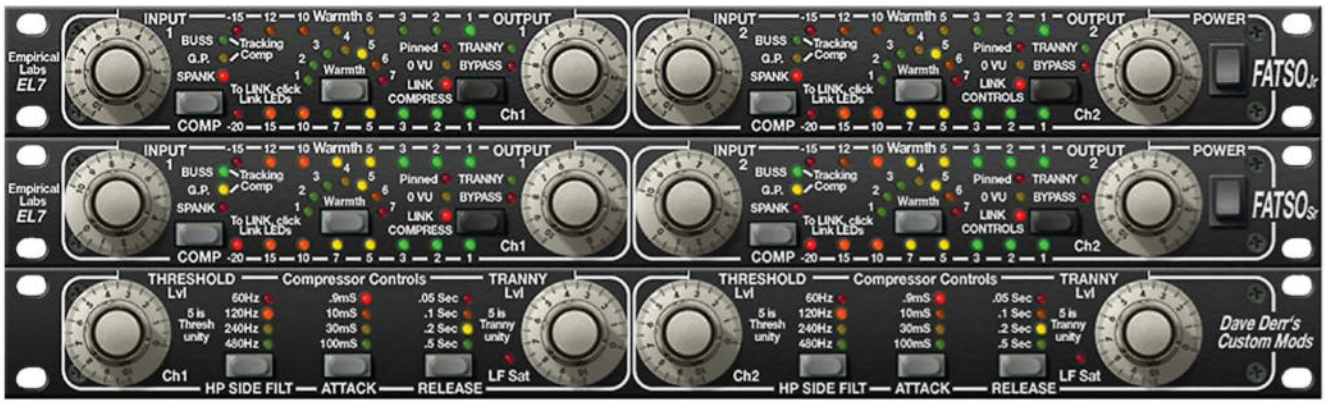
I also layered that battery kick sample with a big, dirty, noisy, and cinematic bass drum sample from a library called DAMAGE 2. DAMAGE 2 offers over 40,000 samples and 60 GB's of pure, percussive inspiration. Those sounds range from a 72" massive

bass drums, to toms, and an amazing selection of struck "found sounds" even including a trash dumpster! Everything in this virtual instrument library was recorded at the world-class scoring stage at Skywalker Sound.

With this new layered, "enhanced" kick drum using the trigger, you can hear the intentional grit and slightly distorted movement inside the DAMAGE 2 sample. I used that massive sounding drum sample as a second layer to make it obvious that the kick drum trigger is ON. DAMAGE 2 is providing the sub frequencies and then BATTERY 4 is adding some additional punch. You could use a blended / layered, hybrid kick drum sound like this to create a new song or you might find it works well on stage with a band. For example, let's say you get hired as a drummer to go on tour with a pop artist and they want to use the exact kick drum sample they used on one of the songs from the album. Your job is to load that sample into Ableton or on to your Roland SPD-SX and trigger that from your kick drum live on stage.

Creative Enhanced Kick

If we take the same process and apply this to more unusual sounds, this is where hybrid drumming gets really fun. I spend most of my efforts creating unusual drum loops and brand-new music for my albums and my music licensing catalog. By layering both electronic kick drum samples plus some tonal synth sounds treated with audio effects and sound design techniques, I am able to generate grooves that sound more like the foundation of a new song or film cue.



In the **next video example**, I am layering an electronic bass drum sample for added punch but also triggering a second sound from BATTERY that has a crunchy tonal 8-bit synth quality. When I dialed in this layer, it immediately made the drum groove feel more like a song. This is where the hybrid drum triggering inspires creativity and forces me to think like a record producer and a songwriter. I can sit down with a guitar player or vocalist and start building a full track around this groove. It has a "vibe" because of the way I "sound designed" that synth layer. That weird synth also inspired me to mix my acoustic drums more aggressively. I used a more experimental, overly compressed sound by utilizing the FATSO plug-in by UNIVERSAL AUDIO on the acoustic drum sound to make it crunchier and more modern. The FATSO plug-in also adds analog character and "glue" to my drum tracks.

BD Trigger "Harmonic Drones"

As a follow up to the creative enhancement example above, let's go a step further and introduce a harmonic/chord-based component to the bass drum layer. In the **next example,** I am using a beefy electronic kick drum sample from BATTERY but I also added a new virtual instrument from REAKTOR. The REAKTOR kick sample is actually a kick drum sample layered with a synth playing a minor chord. I processed the minor chord with effects inside Cubase to make it sound even dirtier. **Here is an example** of the groove I played with the midi bass drum trigger OFF.

Here is an example of the same groove with the MIDI bass drum trigger TURNED ON. Just by using one bass drum trigger, I can create a "mood" that will become the foundation of a new song or instrumental track that would work really well in films and/or TV shows that I am working on.

Here is another video example using a new groove with a faster tempo and a different "harmonic BD sample" from REAKTOR. This track has an up-tempo rock groove and an even more prominent "evolving synth sample," layered with a sub-frequency analog style bass synth from a virtual instrument called MASSIVE X. I like this bass tone because it reminds me an old Simmons kick drum sound. My plan is to export the stems of this track and further mix and produce this as a full up song with one of my favorite vocalists.

In the **next example,** I am using the MIDI bass drum trigger to access a KORG MINILOGUE external hardware synth. I set up 9 different midi notes on my bass drum trigger and each time I hit the kick drum, I "step" through one of the 9 midi notes using something called ALTERNATE MODE. I also pre-determined the length of each midi note using a midi gate time. Each time I stomp on the kick drum, the midi note will last 2.7 seconds and then it will stop with a trailing decay. In musical terms, it's lasting 2 bars long at the tempo I chose for this groove. **Here is a video example** of how the bass drum triggers the arpeggiator synth patch on the KORG Synth. I will hit the downbeat on my bass drum every 2 bars.

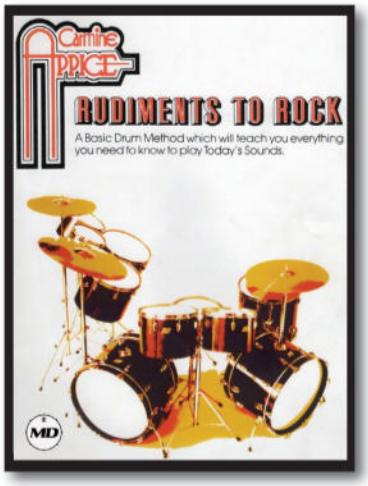
When triggering an ARPEGGIATOR in real-time, you can choose your favorite tempo inside the synth by adjusting the BPM of the synth patch. Each time I play the bass drum, I am essentially firing off a synth click track to play along with. It's really fun when it's used with "alternate mode." I set up a specific range of midi notes and I keep everything intentionally random with the rhythms and grooves that I played in the next video example. The more syncopated I play on the bass drum, the more surprising and unexpected the arpeggio patterns become. I am barely scratching the surface and potential with this approach. **Here** is an improvised groove using the bass drum trigger and the KORG MINILOGUE set to the same ARPEGGIATOR patch that I used in the example video above.

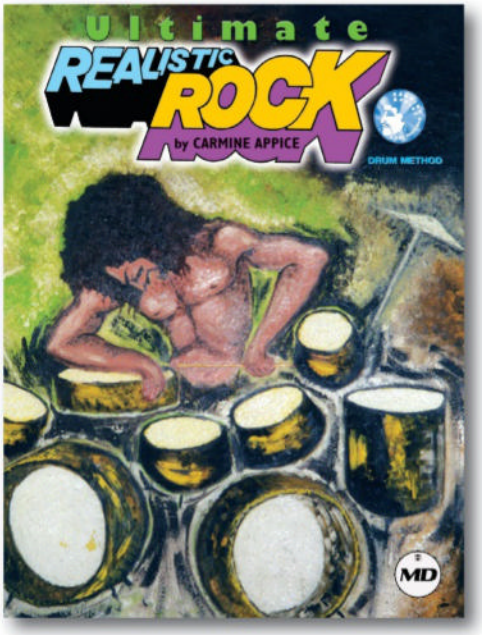
If you are doing all of this properly, you are not just drumming, you are composing music! I hope you enjoyed this creative exploration of using just one acoustic bass drum trigger. See you next month when we make the bold leap to the next level and add a snare drum trigger!

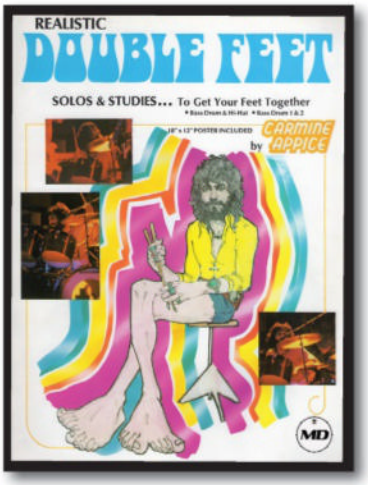
Check out Tony's *Modern Drummer* profile page at moderndrummer.com

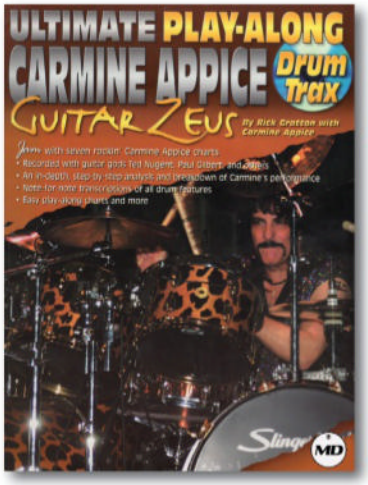
MODERN DRUMMER Media Presents:

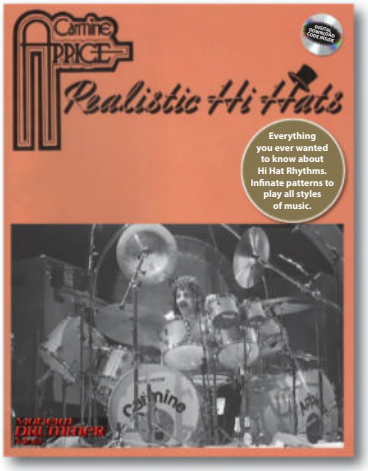
The Carmine Appice Library Collection

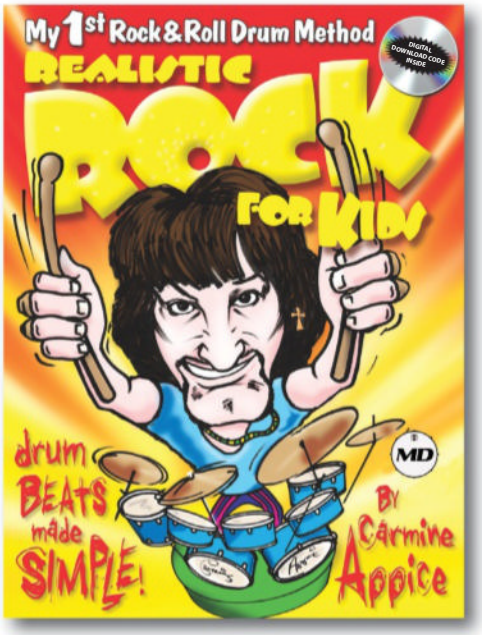


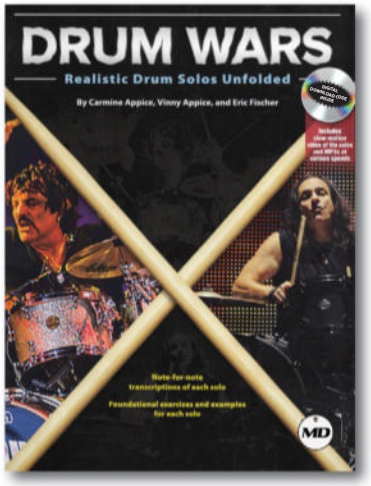


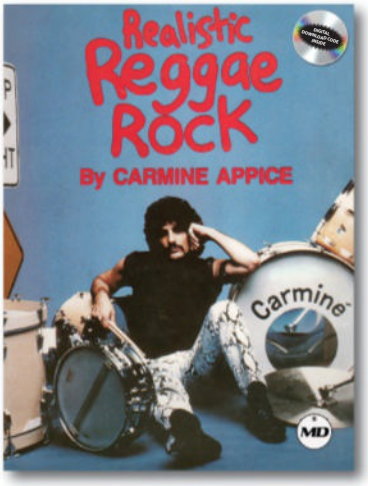












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Donn Bennett's Drum Vault:
The Carmine Appice Drum Collection

By Donn Bennett

Drummer, singer, songwriter, soloist, band leader, author, educator, innovator. It's nearly impossible to describe Carmine Appice's massive influence on the drum world. He sits near the top of Rolling Stone magazine's list of the Top 100 Drummers of All Time. His Realistic Rock Drum Method is the most popular rock drum book ever written. He's helped redefine the modern drum set with his pioneering use of double bass drums, concert toms, gongs, tympani, and Chinese cymbals.

As a founding member of Vanilla Fudge, Cactus, Beck, Bogert & Appice, King Kobra and Blue Murder, and as a member of Rod Stewart, Edgar Winter, Ozzy Osborne, and Ted Nugent's bands, he was always more than "just the drummer." He put his unique stamp on each band's sound and image. His over-the-top solos were a highlight of every live performance. If you didn't know who Carmine Appice was at the beginning of a show, you DEFINITELY knew who he was by the end.

In 1980 Carmine was a HUGE rockstar, and I was a huge fan. He'd just released his first solo album and was the featured drummer in The Rod Stewart Group. You couldn't open any music magazine without finding Carmine in a full-page ad for one of the many drum products he endorsed. To quote a Zildjian cymbal ad from this era, "Everyone wants a piece of Appice."

In 1980, I'd just landed my first "real" job, managing the drum department at music store in the Seattle area. The shop was sponsoring one of Carmine's drum clinics and I was given the job of coordinating it. Getting to work with a bonafide rockstar like Carmine was a dream come true. Working directly with Carmine, his manager, and the companies he endorsed laid the groundwork for my own career path. I still employ the lessons I learned from all of them. Carmine remains a close friend and mentor to this day.

Carmine has been telling me about his storage lockers for decades. They were packed with drums going back to the very start of his career. He'd forgotten much of what he had, because you couldn't even see what was in the back, without completely unpacking the whole locker. After years of talking about it, and with the help of Carmine's longtime tech Thomas Leblanc, and my truck driving pal Randy Lee Munro, we packed everything into Randy's truck and brought it to my Seattle warehouse.

When it arrived, there truly was something from every phase of Carmine's extraordinary career. There was unique, custom and prototype items including the 1965 Ludwig Supraphonic snare he'd used with Jeff Beck, Cactus Vanilla Fudge and Rod Stewart. Every piece comes with a great story about how Carmine used it to make rock and roll history. Here's a few of them...

Carmine and I with his gold record for Rod Stewart's *Blondes Have More Fun*. Carmine co-wrote the album's lead single "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy." The song went on to be named by *Rolling Stone* magazine as one of the *Top 500 Greatest Songs of All Time.*

Here's some of Carmine's drums including his Jeff Beck and Rod Stewart era bass drums; Beck, Bogert, and Appice vintage timpani tom; Blue Murder Premier timpani; and Ozzy Osborne era Slingerland throne.

Below is Carmine's custom 1980s Mapex all brass 5.5" x 14" snare drum. Carmine used this snare on his *Guitar Zeus* album project and on tour with Edgar Winter. Check out the custom "Carmine Appice" nameplate.

This 1965 Ludwig 5x14 Supraphonic snare drum is the oldest item in the collection. Carmine used this drum with Vanilla Fudge, Cactus, and Beck, Bogert, and Appice, and Rod Stewart.

One of the first prototypes of Carmine's Sabian signature series Chinese cymbals.

The very first Istanbul Mehmet Carmine Appice Realistic Rock Chinese cymbal.

Carmine popularized the use of Chinese cymbals on the modern drum set in rock and roll. He started using them back in the 1960s. This Wuhan 18" China is the first one he ever used. This is the one that started it all.

OUT NOW!

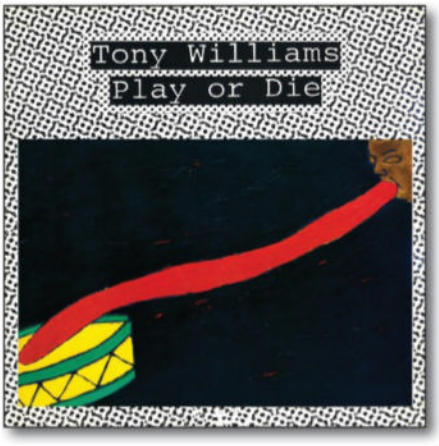
Modern Drummer spotlighting certain new recordings that have the drums at the center of their sound. These recordings might be drummer-led, or just include a high-quality, special, or unique drumming and musical performance from the drummer and/or musicians in the band. This column will not be restricted to only recordings, we will also be spotlighting new books and DVD's that are being released. We encourage our readers to listen to the recordings that inspire them, and keep looking for new musical avenues to explore. You'll never know what new music you might find inspiring! Listen and learn.

Emerson, Lake, & Palmer
The Singles Box Set
BMG Records
Carl Palmer, drums.

This box set of a dozen seven inch singles/45s is billed as a celebration of the fifty year anniversary of Emerson, Lake, & Palmer (ELP) and focuses on material from the decade they dominated, the 1970s, as well as the early 1990s. ELP was among the masters of the progressive Rock that grew out of the developing UK rock of the late 1960s, yet ELP was equally skilled at crafting haunting and pensive songs as well. LP's had begun nudging singles out of the spotlight during the mid-1960s. Yes, ELP was an LP band, but *Singles* confirms they were skilled at offering concise songs as well. ELP incorporated classical music and ballads, introduced elements of jazz and, of course, helped define the dramatic arena shaking sound of prog rock. Both Keith Emerson and Greg Lake passed in 2016 leaving drummer/percussion master Carl Palmer as the sole survivor. The box set was the brainchild of Palmer, himself.

The dozen enticingly colored discs are housed in an alluring container. Each single is wrapped in a full color reproduction of an original picture sleeve. In addition, there's a booklet plus newly minted 'art cards' that offer a 2022 interpretation of all twelve images. By the time you've unwrapped the final disc, you've heard a little bit of everything. Depending on your experience, you'll revisit familiar old favorites, rediscover songs buried in the back of your mind or, with a few of the selections, discover something new and refreshing. By Scott Gudell

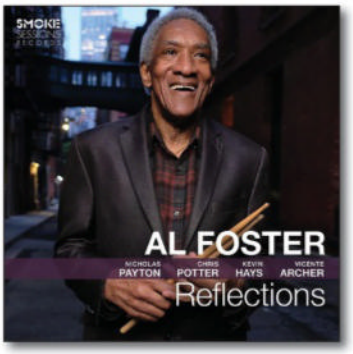
Tony Williams
Play or Die
Mig Moosicus Records
Tony Williams, drums



In 1980, Tony Williams, keyboardist Tom Grant, and bassist Patrick O' Hearn went into the studio to record an entire LP of Tony's compositions. There were only 500 records printed, the music and the LP's became thing of legend. Today we can hear it again remixed, sonically improved upon, and authorized by Tony's widow Colleen. Three of the tunes are classic 80's fusion and the compositions are typical of the era, but two are compositions of Tony's ("Para Oriente," and "There Comes a Time") that were previously recorded and rearranged for this session. However, there is nothing typical about the drumming. Tony Williams is ON FIRE! Listen to Tony's classic singles on the intro of "Beach Ball Tango" and the interesting groove on "Jam Tune." Anything that Tony ever recorded is essential listening to me, and this is no different.

Al Foster

Reflections
Smoke Sessions Records
Al Foster, drums



Al Foster is one of the living legends of jazz drumming. On this (his fifth record as a leader) his playful support behind trumpeter Nicholas Payton, saxophonist Chris Potter, and pianist Kevin Hays is musical perfection. Al's inimitable sound is caught perfectly, and the band is tight and swingin! What more can be said when jazz royalty meets some of the best young musical talents around. Al and bassist Vincente Archer provide a pulse that supports, prods, and reacts to some beautiful music and wonderful musicians. Maybe the title is *Reflections*, but this music is looking forward as much as it is reflecting on Al's past playing with Sonny Rollins, Joe Henderson, Herbie Hancock, and Miles Davis.

Wayne Shorter, Terri Lyne Carrington, Leo Genovese, Esperanza Spalding

Live at the Detriot Jazz Festival
Candid Records
Terri Lyne Carrington, drums.

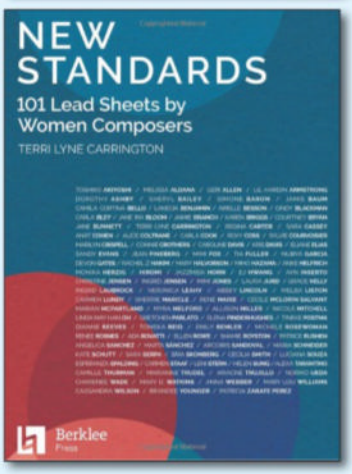
Wayne Shorter is a superhero to me and many musicians. When he plays, composes, records, and speaks, people should pay close attention. This collective of musicians create a beautiful tapestry of music. In Wayne Shorter's words, "All the music has something to do with becoming more human, not becoming a great musician." This is deep music, and everyone is wearing their musical hearts on their sleeves. Drumwise, Terri Lyne Carrington explores, inspires, and creates some profound music on the drums. Amazing!

Terri Lyne Carrington, Kris Davis, Linda May Han Oh, Nicolas Payton, Matthew Stevens

New Standards Vol. 1
Candid Records
Terri Lyne Carrington, drums.
Negah Santos, percussion

Terri Lyne Carrington's championing of of women in the creative world of jazz music has led to a very interesting couple of projects that are profiled here in Out Now. The recording New Standards Vol. 1 collects some of the outstanding compositions from the recent book (of the same name.) While the masterful tunes are the real star here, Terri Lyne and guitarist Matthew Stevens both provide some strong playing, arranging, and production throughout. The set is ultra-varied, ranging from the smooth funky pop of Gretchen Parlato's "Circling" to the funky latinish vibe of Abbey Lincoln's "Throw It Away," to Dianne Reeves' haunting reading of "Moments," to Nicholas Payton, Kris Davis, and Terri Lyne mixing it up on "Continental Cliff" and Marilyn Crispell's "Rounds." And let's not forget the deep groove and pocket of "Respected Destroyer," and "Unchanged" (featuring a great piano solo from Kris Davis. Terri Lyne's drums and Linda May Han Oh's bass groove hard together, their hook-up is strong and in-charge throughout. This is a strong collective of musicians playing an enjoyable set of New Standards, let's hope there are many more volumes to come!

Terri Lyne Carrington

New Standards: 101 Lead Sheets by Women Composers
Berklee Press

This book is a GREAT idea! Jazz musicians around the world now have a whole new set of tunes to learn, perform, and dissect. The fact that these tunes are all written by women composers is a wonderful idea, but if these weren't fantastic and playable songs, the idea would fall flat. Thankfully Terri Lyne Carrington has gathered the best and brightest composers from a long lineage of composers. Not only are wonderful drummer-composers like Cindy Blackman, Allison Miller, and Sherrie Maricle represented; but we are also blessed by compositions from the entire history of jazz from Lil Hardin Armstrong to Mary Lou Williams, to Geri Allen, and Esperanza Spalding. The way that the tunes are presented is a nice feature as well. Most of the tunes are one or two pages long so they are very readable and performable, and the separations of tunes (Blues, Groove, Post-Bop, Odd-Time and Mixed Meters, South American/Afro-Cuban Global, and many more) make this even more valuable.

John Entwistle

Rarities Oxumed Volume One
Deko Records
Steve Luongo, Keith Moon, drums

While Keith Moon goes uncredited on this collection's opening track "Bogey Man," the press release, the drumming, and the sense of humor tells us it's him. The John Entwistle band's Steve Luongo plays drums on other tracks, Entwistle's studio band often had a good bit of a Genesis sound, and John's voice often took on a bit of a Phil Collins sound. Luongo's drumming fit nicely with "The Ox's" bass playing, and he framed John's tunes nicely. This disc features some rarities, demos, and live tracks. "I Wouldn't Sleep with You" has a strong Who vibe, and a nice drum intro. "Back on the Road" features a nice bass solo, I enjoyed the live tracks of "Trick of the Light," "Under a Raging Moon," (featuring a great drum solo and performance from Steve Luongo) and "Shakin' All Over" (with an amazing bass solo from Entwistle) the most of all. Entwistle was an amazing bassist and he had a a great band, a few of these tracks document just that.

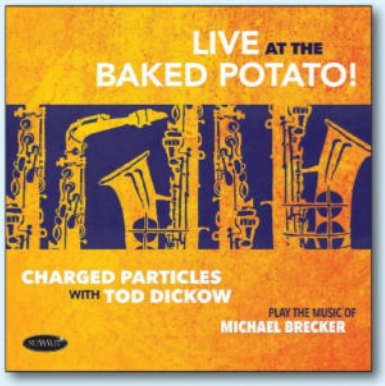
The Chris Parker Trio

Tell Me
Self Produced
Chris Parker, drums

To tell you about Chris Parker's new jazz record, I'll leave it up to Randy Brecker. Randy wrote in the notes to the record, "Chris Parker was one of the best funk/fusion drummers ever... A recently released Brecker Brothers Band CD recorded Live at The Bottom Line will attest to this, and I rest my case. But then Chris Parker wanted more, and he studied composition and jazz drumming and has come full circle all these years later. He's now a great jazz drummer and composer, one of the best, and after listening to this CD, I again rest my case!" Chris' trio of Kyoko Oyobe and Ameen Saleem, his new record entitled *Tell Me*, and his thoughtfully crafted tunes prove all of Brecker's thoughts. This can't be the same drummer I heard with Stuff, Lou Rawls, Laura Nyro, and Ashford and Simpson. But it is!!! Today Chris Parker uses the same musicality in swinging his trio as he used "back in the day" creating a groove for pop hits, funky fusion, and movie soundtracks. What an evolution. I'll still listen to his old classics, but I am adding the *new* Chris Parker to heavy rotation.

Charged Particles with Tod Dickow

Live at the Baked Potato, Play the Music of Michael Brecker
Summit Records
Jon Krosnick, drums



What a wonderful surprise this record is, and what a wonderful idea for a record. This longtime trio, first assembled by drummer Jon Krosnick, has been a mainstay in the San Francisco Bay area for over 30 years. For this live tribute to the compositions of Michael Brecker the band enlisted "Breck-a-phile" Tod Dickow, and they couldn't have made a better choice. It is simply impossible for any modern saxophonist to not be influenced by the playing of Michael Brecker, but his compositions are often a little overlooked, but not here! Charged Particles and Tod Dickow do a simply masterful job of relaunching these tunes into orbit. And we all know Mike is listening and smiling. Krosnick finds the proper energy of each tune, and everyone shines. Additional kudos to Bill Milkowski for writing such perfect and informative liner notes for the record and to the band for supporting The Michael Brecker Family Foundation for cancer research. Great music for a great cause, in tribute to a great musician.

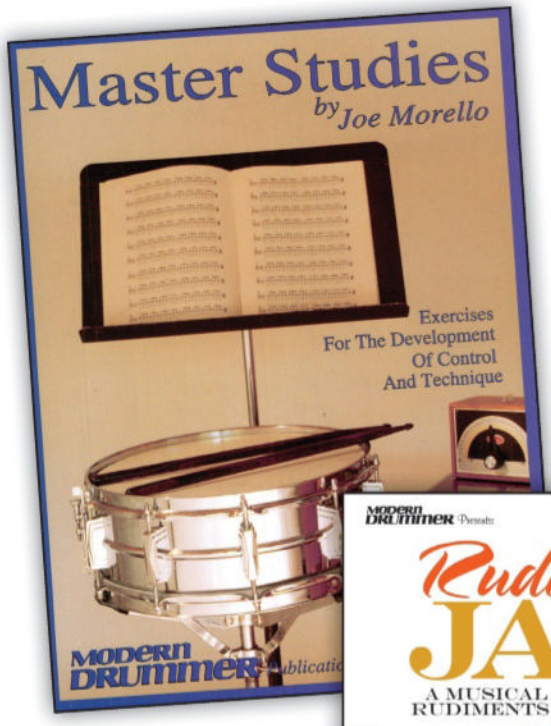
Alex Acuña

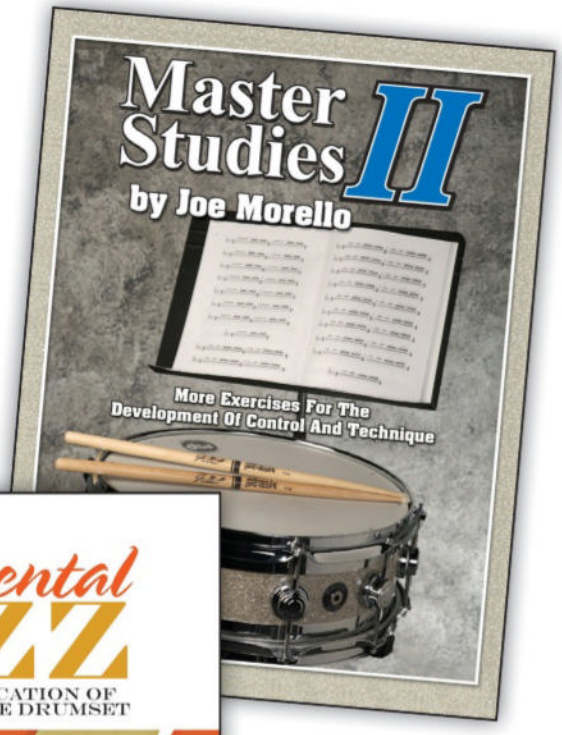
Gifts
Le Coq Records
Alex Acuña, drums and percussion

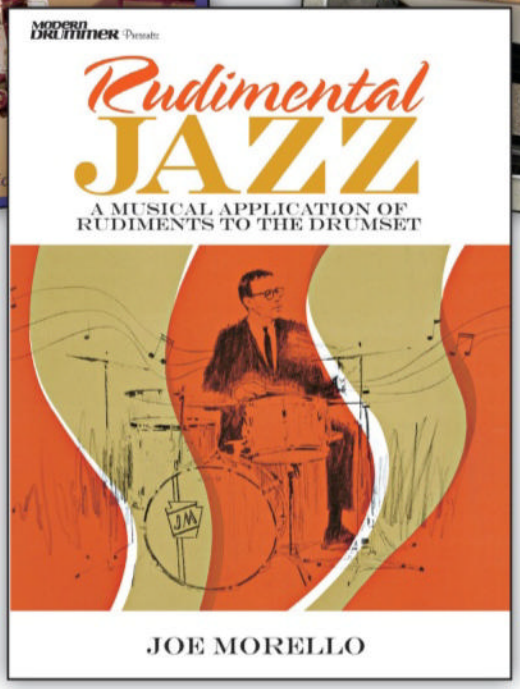
Alex Acuña plays joyous music, and there is a lot of joy on this CD. I have never seen Alex play without a smile on his face, and the smiles come through loud and clear on this CD entitled *Gifts*. Alex's drumming and pecussion playing create a wonderful launching point for his band which includes bassist John Pena, keyboardist Otmaro Ruiz, and guitarist Ramon Stagnaro. Listen to Alex's fat backbeats on "Mercy, Mercy" and the shifting fusion of "Chuncho." Listen to the sound that Alex produces with all of his hand drums (congas and bongos,) and notice how well it blends into the musical surroundings. Saxophonist Lorenzo Ferrero sounds strong throughout. He creates a nice musical yin to Alex Acuña's yang on Herbie Hancock's classic composition "One Finger Snap." This is not Alex's first recording as a leader, but it might be his best.

MODERN DRUMMER Media Presents: Lessons From The Greats

The Joe Morello Collection







Master Studies
This book focuses on these important aspects: accent studies, buzz-roll exercises, single and double-stroke patterns, control studies, flam patterns, dynamic development, endurance studies, and much more!

Master Studies II
Like Master Studies, this is a workbook of material to use in developing the hands for drumming. Challenging exercises encourage students to learn slow, sensible and accurate practice techniques.

Rudimental Jazz
The precursor to his two most widely used instructional books – Master Studies and Master Studies II – this book covers: techniques such as right and left hand grips, playing position, striking the snare drum & hi-hat and more; beginning exercises; drum beats; teacher's charts; graphic cutouts and more.

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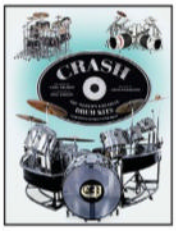
Ludwig Vistalite Led Zeppelin Reunion Kit

The drum kit shown here was custom made by the Ludwig drum company for Jason Bonham's use in the Led Zeppelin reunion show. It replicates the configuration that John Bonham used for dozens of Led Zeppelin performances, including a 14 X 26 bass drum, a 10 X 14 rack tom mounted on a snare drum stand, and 16 X 16 and 16 X 18 floor toms. But Jason's kit also adds a few original touches. Where John used an amber Vistalite acrylic shell kit with chrome hard-ware, Jason's kit features yellow Vistalite shells fitted with black hardware. However, champagne pink sparkle inlays in the bass drum hoops are a somewhat unusual feature of Jason's kit. The accompanying 6.5 X 14 snare drum features a black chrome finish, and the front bass drum head displays Jason's signature.



This comes from the book *Crash: The World's Greatest Drum Kits,* available at **moderndrummer.com**

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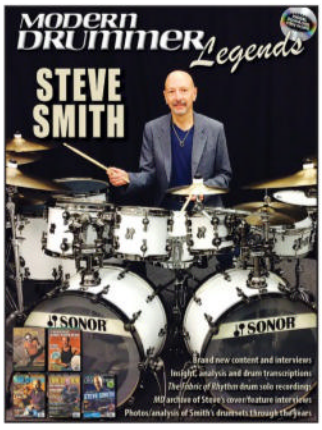

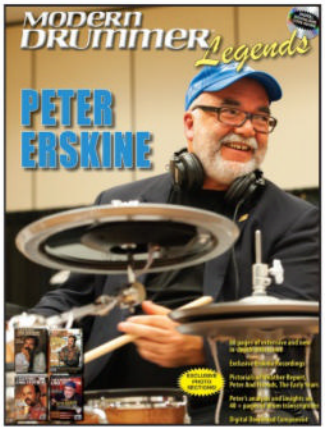

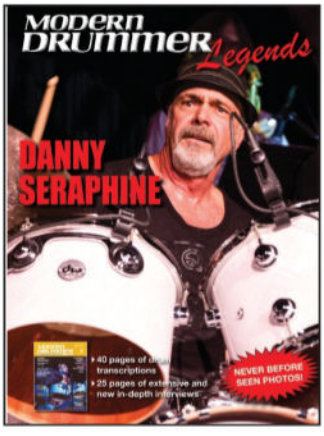

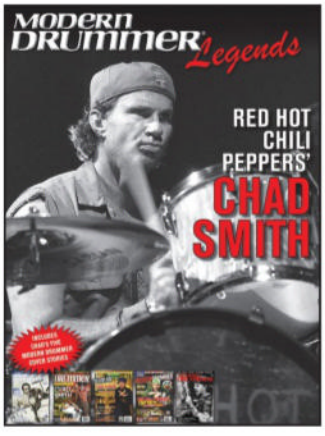

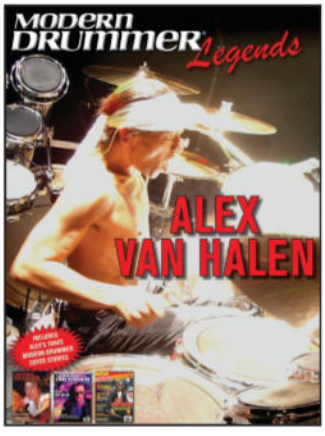

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